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BULLETIN

OF THE

MADRAS GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

EDITED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

ĪRAVAS AND CULTURE CHANGE

BY

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NEW SERIES—*General Section, Vol. V. No. 1*

MADRAS
PRINTED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT, GOVERNMENT PRESS
1943

Price, Rs.

FOREWORD

The study of the manner in which non-European communities react to the ubiquitous impact of European culture has been recognized during the last two decades as an important branch of the science of Man. Interesting and suggestive speculations of the older anthropologists on the development of culture through diffusion prepared the ground for the recent studies of the changing native. These studies have to be concrete, intensive, and strictly empirical, as not infrequently the anthropologist is called upon to suggest solutions for problems of practical expediency, but they also provide valuable data to the theoretical anthropologist. Contacts of native and European cultures have created numerous problems in Africa, Australia and America which are being vigorously studied by students of applied anthropology. There is every hope that studies of present day culture-contact will help the historian of culture to understand better the manner in which customs were propagated in the past. " The process of diffusion " writes Prof. Malinowski, " has been very little studied in its present day manifestations, and it is only from the empirical study of contemporary diffusion that an answer can be found to its past history."[1]

The contribution that India can make to the study of the culture diffusion, past and present, is of high theoretical and practical interest. India has a culture of unequalled antiquity the main pattern and traits of which have shown a great capacity for persistence and adaptability in the face of revolutionary changes, as for example, during the ascendancy of the Buddhist creed over Brahmanism. India also has a literature and living traditions that go back to a misty past of which in other parts of the world there are only the most fragmentary archaelogical relics over the interpretation of which scholars have to wage endless wars of words. The historian of culture in India has, thus, some advantage over his fellows elsewhere, but his task does not thereby become less difficult. To illustrate the handicaps that scholars encounter in getting at the meaning of ancient culture traits briefly referred to in the pre-puranic literature of India, I may mention the various and often conflicting interpretations given of the Vedas. The Max-Mullerian explanation of the vedas is unconvincing to the better informed among modern students of religious history ; Sayana's orthodox interpretation is found to be unsatisfactory by Swami Dayanand and by Sri Aurobindo (*see* ***Arya***, I—V,

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[1] B. Malinowski, Essay on " Culture " in *Enc. of Social Sciences*.

published from Pondicherry). In the face of such divergence of opinion among the most competent scholars, the anthropologist cannot use the available historical and literary data with that degree of certitude about his material which is necessary for a scientific study of society. His work, therefore, is to be concentrated on living cultures where interpretational difficulties are less pronounced.

Indian castes and tribes, intensively studied *in situ* would help a correct understanding not only of their present culture but also of the past of which mere glimpses are seen in literature and tradition. Who could, for example, have expected a survival of a pre-historic Mohenjo-daro deity among present day tribes of India ? An ethnological approach to ancient Indian culture has made this discovery possible.[1] Das, von Furer-Haimendorf, Chattopadhyay, Ghurye, Grigson, Karve, Majumdar, Nirmal Bose, and Rai Bahadur Roy have in recent years made important contributions to the ethnological study of culture. All modern studies in anthropology make references to changes in culture, but it is not often easy to get an idea of the sum total of the changes from casual statements scattered through the monographs. To remedy this, culture change itself has to be adopted as the central theme. My friend, Dr. D. N. Majumdar's " A Tribe in Transition " is, I think, the first Indian publication in this new line. With the help of similar monographs covering the various cultural areas of India, we shall know more of the dynamics of Indian culture.

The study of Irava[2] culture in the following pages was undertaken on the suggestion of Prof. Raymond Firth. Some of the themes dealt with here were subjects for discussions in his seminars. As a result of these discussions in which students from different parts of the world took part, the need was felt for a minute analysis of caste situations, untouchability, magic, etc. There are several books on caste, but all of them cover the whole range of caste practices of hundreds of different communities from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and the inevitable result is haziness. I have tried to deal with these matters microscopically from the point of view of a single caste. There are several half-baked theories on the origin of caste suggested by learned writers, but they are so conflicting on account of their being based on partially analysed factors of culture very often divorced from their context. The evaluation of cultural traits by functional analysis has been insisted on by Prof. Malinowski and the foremost among his students, Dr. Firth. Prof. Malinowski and Prof. Firth gave me the necessary background

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[1] A. Aiyappan, " Siva Seal of Mohenjo-daro," *Journ. Asiatic. Soc. of Bengal, V*, 1939, No. 3.

in anthropological theory and method. The former was specially interested in the marriage customs of Malabar and encouraged other students of his, such as His Royal Highness Prince Peter of Greece to come to India to investigate the subject. Any thing valuable in the following pages, must, I feel, be due to the inspiration and guidance that it was my privilege to receive from Prof. Malinowski and Prof. Firth.

Several friends in India and England have laid me under a deep debt of obligation by their help in this work, which I most gratefully acknowledge. I must make particular mention of my former class-mates, Dr. Piddington (Aberdeen) R and Dr. Raum (East Africa) who took special interest in Indian problems. The revival of all anthropological work in the Madras Province under the auspices of the Madras Museum has been due to the efforts of Dr. F. H. Gravely, until recently Superintendent of the Madras Museum. He has been guiding my work for over eleven years, and for all that he has taught me by example and by precept, my indebtedness to him is too great for any formal acknowledgment. I recollect with gratefulness the help and encouragement I have been receiving from two enthusiastic supporters of Indian anthropology, namely, Mr. F. J. Richards, I.C.S. (Retired) and Mr. K. de B. Codrington. "Treat the villager as your Guru" was the parting advice which Mr. Richards gave me, which I should like to pass on to all Indian anthropologists.

GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, MADRAS,
5th February 1942.

A. AIYAPPAN.

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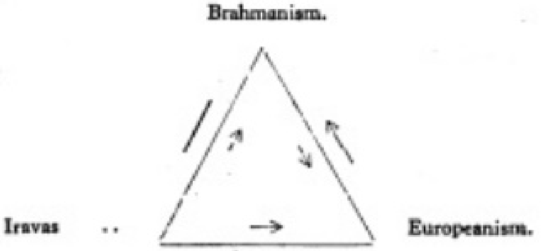
IRAVAS AND CULTURE CHANGE

CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTION.

THE PROBLEM.

Indian culture has been undergoing far-reaching changes during the last 150 years of British rule. Though in the course of her long history she has never before experienced such rapid changes, it is not to be supposed that Indian culture was ever static. The unchanging East is a myth, a superstitious slogan. A study of India's cultural history during pre-British days is bound to be full of interest, but the investigation of it is the proper field of the archaeologist and the antiquarian. The student of culture change is primarily interested in obtaining his data by direct observation in the field, for that is his cultural laboratory ; he is interested in explaining and analysing present-day realities, but in order to get to his generalisations that involve the time factor, he has to a limited extent to be the historian of his culture. He makes cross-sections of his culture at two given points in time and analyses the two pictures thus obtained. The longer the interval between the two selected temporal points, the greater the chances of error in the data, and consequently also in the interpretations, but, if, on the other hand, the interval is too short, the changes may be superficial and misleading. Every culture trait requires a period of gestation which we have so far no means of ascertaining with exactness, though here and there some attempts have been made to do so for advanced literate communities. The period of gestation should obviously vary with the nature of the trait, the influence of its carriers and the relative levels of culture of the donor and the recipient groups. Some traits may require centuries to be effectively rooted in the host culture.

My task is, strictly speaking, the study in a limited sphere of a tri-cultural situation involving the processes of action and reaction, on the one hand, between the culture of the Brahmans and that of the Iravas of Malabar, and the impact of Europeanism* on both the native cultural foci mentioned, on the other. The diagram below (text fig. 1) represents



TEXT FIG. 1.

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* The effect of contact with native population on the Europeans living in their midst for fairly long periods is an interesting subject for study. Of course various phases of the situation are referred to by writers on Anglo-Indian problems. For example *see* R. Byron, *An Essay on India* (London, 1931).

the situation schematically the arrows showing the direction as well as the magnitude of the forces in action. The Iravas will, for our present purpose, engage most of our attention.

METHOD.

As the Iravas have a stratified culture due to differential rates of change undergone by their internal groups, it is possible to see the processes of change and study them objectively, thus obviating to a great degree the necessity for reconstructions of cultures by a method of arguing back into the past. As elsewhere, the towns exhibit the results of culture change more markedly than the rural villages. It is from towns that new traits diffuse outwards to the villages that are remote from the direct impact of Europeanism. An approximate idea of the days before the contact with Europeanism can be obtained from a study of the villages in the interior which might for purposes of description be called backward villages. History, travellers' accounts and the traditions, both written and oral, of the people contain much reliable sociological material with which by a process of elimination we attempt to visualise the ancient culture of the villages. If this historical check were not available, it is doubtful if we can confidently say that the backward villages represent an approximation to the pre-British culture of Malabar. Even among the villages themselves there are to be found various stages of culture change. Again, in the same village, the various families show different degrees of acculturation. We observe individuals from villages settling in towns and adapting themselves to urban conditions. We have then the reports of the communal assemblies of the people where innovations are discussed and resolutions passed on them. A synthesis of the data obtained from all these sources enables us to find the true culture trends and their effects.

Similar methods have been adopted by Dr. Richards[1], Dr. Mair[2] and Miss Hunter[3]. Hunter studied her native tribes in the reserves where they were in the most primitive conditions, in parts of the reserves in contact with whites for a long time, on European farms, and in towns. Depending on oral traditions, and the observed present day conditions these students of culture change in Africa have tried to reconstruct the cultural history of the tribes dealt with by them, but they did not have the advantage that I have of dealing with a literate group with written history. Oral tradition, good as it is, cannot be taken on its face value, and before anything of it is accepted must be very critically examined. Culture change in my area has been less cataclysmal than in Africa where the hectic speed of the changes and the racial animosities arising from direct conflicts of interests are likely to cause confusion, however vary the ethnographer may be.

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[1] "Village Census in the Study of Culture Contact." *Africa*, vii, 1.

[2] L.P. Mair, *An African Tribe of the Twentieth Century* (London, 1934) *and Native Policies in Africa* (London, 1936).

[3] Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest* (London, 1936).

It may be objected that the method adopted here is a Graebnerian "conceptual reconstruction, a transference of spatial relations into time relations."[1] But there are significant points of difference between Graebner's methods and those adopted for the study of modern culture contacts and change. Firstly, we limit ourselves to known cultures and periods, and no assumptions are arbitrarily made regarding culture processes and linkages. Graebnerian culture mechanism is too simple to be true. To avoid the vagueness involved in going too far back to conjectures about cultural conditions of the past, and at the same time, to make sufficient allowance of time for the trends in culture to be definitely discernible, I shall limit myself with the history of culture of the past four generations for which direct evidence is available. This also roughly corresponds to the period when the work of acculturation by the English became really efficient and effective.

India is almost a continent and the study of her cultural history even for the last 100 years will require several well-edited encyclopaedic volumes and an army of students. Such a study is too ambitious to be undertaken by any single soul. The stock-taking of European influence on Indian culture is an immense task and it will be folly to tackle it *en masse*. What is required and is practicable is a series of regional studies dealing concretely with local problems. I have therefore chosen the south-western corner of India—the Malabar Coast of Peninsular India—and focussed my attention on a single caste there, the Iravas, for several reasons the most important of which is that I am myself a member of that caste. The Iravas are numerically the largest Hindu caste on the Malabar Coast. Standing at the head of the list of polluting or lower castes, they have, in the course of the last few decades, made history by their all round progress economically, socially and politically, and have actively contributed to the revolutionizing changes in Hindu institutions of Malabar. No caste throws better light than the Iravas on the effects of the impact of the west on the Hindus.

In the presentation of the material, I have tried as far as possible to give concrete details and case histories, and descriptions of typical situations. Anthropology being so different from the physical sciences, we can never hope to reduce the facts of life to simple formulae. What is gained in brevity will be lost in clarity. A good description of a quarrel brings out more sociology than pages of formal facts presented in pigeon-holes. To feel that we are dealing with human beings. to give the readers the proper background to understand the working of the institutions of people most often so different from those that they are generally familiar with, and more over to help the student to retain what he reads in his memory (this I say from my personal experience as a student of anthropology), nothing is more helpful than "cross-sections" of the people's everyday life. Untouchability, for example, is a very simple custom to those who have lived in India, but to be able to make persons unfamiliar with India to understand all its implications, many commonplace incidents of Indian life will

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[1] G. C. Wheeler, "The Conception of Causal Relation in Social Science" in *Festskrift Westermarck*, pp. 189-190.

have to be dealt with, and such people as have a craving for profound facts and anthropological curiosities may find them dull. But the object of anthropological studies is to understand the working of human institutions and since life is so full of commonplace incidents, students of society cannot neglect them.[1]

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE.

The Malabar country (plate xii) known to its native people as Malayalam—the land of hills and valleys, and to the more sophisticated among them, as Kerala, the land of coconut trees, stretches from N. Lat. 10° right to Cape Comorin, the extreme southern point of India, and is bounded on the east by the high mountains, the Western Ghats, which form the great physical barrier between Malabar and the Tamil districts on the east. There are a few passes in the Western Ghats, *e.g.*, the Tamarasseri Pass, the Palghat Gap, etc., which allow communication between the two areas. From the sandy coast lashed by the waves of the Arabian Sea to the foot of the hills the distance varies from twenty to seventy miles. "Stretching westward from the long spurs, extensive ravines, dense forests and the tangled jungles of the Ghat Mountains lie the gentler slopes, rolling down and the gradually widening valleys closely cultivated, and nearer the sea-board the low laterite tablelands end abruptly in cliffs and give place to rice plains and coconut fringed backwaters."[2] The rivers of Malabar are mostly short rapid streams navigable only near their mouths. Many of them are only useful for floating down large rafts of timber from the jungles to the distributing depots at the mouths. The rivers discharge their waters not directly into the sea, but into several inland brackish lagoons or backwaters between the sandy coastline and the mainland. These backwaters are interconnected by a series of natural and a few artificial canals and serve as important waterways extending throughout the length of Malabar. Native crafts of all kinds and nowadays modern steam and motor boats crowd the backwaters carrying merchandise and passengers. The songs of the boatmen as they punt their *changadams* can be heard all along the backwaters giving an eeriness to the night-piece on the lagoons. On the banks of these backwaters fishing and coir industries thrive. Through breaches in the coast connecting the lagoons with the sea, native sailing vessels enter the lagoons. The Cochin harbour is one of the big lagoons the entrance to which is kept open and deep by constant dredging. Early European trading stations were all built at important points on the backwater canal system. The coastal belt is one vast coconut garden (plate v) interpersed with a few rice fields. Behind this is the rice area proper (plate i, figs. 1, 3), with a sprinkling of coconut and areca palms, pepper vines and fruit trees. More in the interior where the country becomes hilly, rice cultivation is confined to the valleys between

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[1] It is this craze for profundities and the unwillingness to write on what they regard as dull that leads to the staleness of many anthropological contributions from India. Proper discipline in the theoretical side of anthropology is the only possible remedy.

[2] W. Logan, *Malabar*, p. 5.

the hills, on the slopes of which grow various fruit trees, particularly mango and jack-fruit. The higher ranges of the Ghats are clothed with dense forests, infested with wild animals such as tigers, elephants and bisons. Tame elephants are commonly used here as living tractors by timber merchants. The teak, tea and coffee plantations employing armies of labourers from the plains below, are owned mostly by European planters.

Malabar can rightly be said to be the gift of the monsoons. The extreme regularity with which these winds blow and the regular alternation of wet and dry seasons make the weather predictable with great accuracy. Towards the end of March 'the first rumblings of thunder are heard among the hills,' and a few thunderstorms occur which bring enough rain for starting the sowing of rice. By the end of May or the beginning of June the whole aspect of the country changes, the sky becomes inky with clouds, lightning blazes, thunder roars and rain pours in torrents. Every field and every little channel become flooded, and there is little chance of anyone getting out without becoming drenched. These heavy rains continue till about the middle of September, which month resembles the English April. There is a lull till November when the North-east monsoon begins to blow and brings a few mild showers. By the end of December, the dry season sets in, the luxuriant verdure of the wet season disappears, the heat of the sun begins to be felt more severely till by May the midday sun blazes and scorches everything under it.

The mean temperature on the sea-coast is about 81° Fahr. and the range between 80° and 70°. The ever-present moisture in the atmosphere augments the discomfort caused by the high temperature. The most unhealthy part of the year is the first half of the monsoon period when, for days continuously, the sky remains overcast with clouds and very strong winds blow day and night.

The heavy rainfall and the alternation of dry and wet periods have a direct bearing on the annual calendar of economic activities of the people. The April showers start the agricultural operations followed by weeding after the fields have been flooded by the rains. When the monsoon is at its height, all outdoor activities are suspended for several days at a stretch. Dried food grains, preserved vegetable relishes, salted fish, arecanuts, and even firewood have to be carefully stored up for the wet months. For the poor it is the season for borrowing at high rates of interest, pawning ornaments and domestic articles to keep the wolf from the door. Both the rich and the poor engage themselves in religious activities during this season reading the sacred books, and repeating the names of the Gods. The economic distress and the period of forced rest come to an end with the beginning of the harvest season in September, Immediately after the great national harvest festival, the second season of rice cultivation begins, allowing farmers and labourers very little time for rest, as the crop has to be raised before the dry season sets in. The second harvest is followed by a long period of festivities of a religious and social nature. The sound of the drums can be heard everywhere as it is an inevitable accompaniment of all communal religious celebrations. Pilgrimages are made

now to the temples at Palni and at Sabarimala, devotees making it a point to go to these sacred places in big parties. This is also the season for arranging and celebrating marriages. Elderly men go 'searching for girls' for the junior members of their family. There is then the grand festival of the equinox which is said to 'lock' the season of mirth.

The Malabar coast as a whole differs from the Tamil districts on the east (see the map) and the Canarese districts on the north in many important cultural features. The Ghat mountains have not only been a physical but also a cultural barrier between Tamil districts and Malabar. The language of Malabar—Malayalam—is an offshoot of the Dravidian linguistic family, like Tamil, Telugu and Canarese, but closely resembling the first, despite isolation on the one hand, and admixture with Sanskrit, on the other. The people of Malabar make pilgrimages to Tamil temples at Palni and Rameswaram. With these the cultura links seem to stop. A traveller from Madras to Malabar, after traversing the extensive lev stretches of the Tamil country with its concentrated villages, big temples, and very dark people all wearing coloured clothes, will find on descending to the plains of Malabar an unbelievable change in the landscape and in the people, which in the fourteenth century impressed the Arab traveller, Shaikh Ibn Batuba, as it does the modern traveller. Says the Shaikh, "We next came into the country of Malabar, which is the country of black pepper . . . The whole of the way by land lies under the shade of trees . . . And in all this space of two months journey there is not a span free from cultivation. For everybody has here a garden and his house is placed in the middle of it; and around the whole of this there is a fence of wood, up to which the ground of each inhabitant comes." The visitor is impressed by the dense vegetation, the well-watered and intensely cultivated plots of rice, the innumerable pools and puddles of water where men, women, children and cattle sport and bathe (plate i, fig 1), the neat but scantily clad men and women in white loin-cloths, and the scattered homesteads each standing on its own ground fenced in and secluded. Architecture here is simple, temples and houses being wood and brick structures insignificant in comparison with the awe-inspiring majesty of the pyramid-like *gopurams* (towers) of the temples in Tamil land. The strong cultural differences are reflected in the social organization, in the relationship of the sexes, in caste prejudices, and even in many items of religious practices, though the peoples are both mainly followers of Hinduism. The man of Malabar has his tuft of hair on the top of his head (plate ii, fig. 3), while the Tamil has it on his occiput; the latter takes pride in his moustaches whereas the former shaves his lips clean. The women of Malabar are only slowly beginning to cover their breasts, the old practice having been for them to go about nude from waist upwards. The Tamils, on the other hand, observed more 'decency' in this respect. The answer of the youth of Malabar to sarcastic remarks about the semi-nude state of their women was: "Our swords are never sheathed, and our women's breasts need no covering." To the Tamils, as a rule, Malabar used to be a land of mystery and strange customs, the land where women rule over their men-folk, where female

deities are more numerous, where powerful magicians work their wondrous spells. The men of Malabar are to the Tamils what the Dobuans are to the Trobrianders, "envied superiors in some ways" and "barbarians in others."* Practitioners of magic and native medicine emigrate in hundreds to the neighbouring Tamil districts and ply their trades very successfully. Economically the Tamils are better off, wealth among them being more evenly distributed than in Malabar; caste prejudices being milder, there is more social cohesion; and arts and crafts, including that of cooking, are better developed than in Malabar.

The rugged landscape of Malabar seems to have left its impress on the people as well. English educated men of Malabar are fond of comparing their district to Scotland of which country their knowledge is considerable on account of most of them having had Scottish missionary teachers. Social stratification is rugged, the gradients steep, the upper classes snobbish and insolent, and the lower classes correspondingly meek and miserable. The Brahmans of Malabar, known generally as the Namputiris,† are very rich, orthodox and averse to change, and until recently resistant to all western influences. The Tamil Brahmans, comparatively poorer, took to English education almost like ducks to water, and are to-day the leaders in all arts and sciences introduced by the English. With a few exceptions the Namputiris are still steeped in their old-world traditions. In utter contrast to the wealthy Brahmans, at the other extreme, there are the agricultural labourers, the Cherumas, living in virtual slavery. Wealth and landlordism on the one side, poverty and meek suffering on the other with the various gradations leading from one to the other—such in a nutshell is the state of society in Malabar. It is but natural that the standard of public morality tends to be low here.

A brief reference may now be made to the bodily characters of the people. According to Brahmanical legends, Malabar coast was reclaimed from the Arabian sea by the Brahman hero, Parasurama, who, standing on the summit of the Ghats, threw his axe westwards and the sea retreated in terror. Parasurama made a gift of the new land to his Brahman followers from the north in order to expiate his sin of killing his enemies, the Kshatriyas. These legends contain much that is self-contradictory. Parasurama is a Brahman culture hero, who, in all probability, was responsible for the spread of Aryan religion into Bombay, Malabar and Orissa. Strangely enough, the very legends that describe Malabar as the gift of the sea to Parasurama, also narrate that the hero subjugated the indigenous barbarians and permitted his followers to have morganatic marriages with the women of the autochthones. There is no doubt that the legends arose to give mythological sanctions to the aberrant marital customs of the Namputiris of Malabar. The Namputiris were, in fact, the last of a series of immigrants who settled in Malabar, but they had a superior culture which they overlaid on the native culture, and in order to allow themselves to mate freely with native women they had their domestic laws radically modified. The Namputiris were physically somewhat

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* Malinowski in his introduction (p. xvi) to *Sorcerers of Dobu*.

† I have transliterated this word which is pronounced with 'p' and 't' softened as Namboodiri

different from the indigenes, in being fairer, taller, hairier and more long-headed. Their descendents by morganatic marriage formed the Aryanised castes of Malabar, such as the castes of temple servants, the so-called Kshatriyas or chiefs, and to some extent, the Nayars who were soldiers, henchmen and servants. The rest of the people—the great majority—remained away from the Brahmans and are to-day the polluting castes. The cross-bred castes underwent considerable modification in physical appearance, the upper classes among them being distinguished by lighter complexion and greater stature. The Brahmans themselves were not unaffected, but underwent considerable contact metamorphism.

The Iravas are darker as a rule than the Namputiris. Except when the Nayars are highly mixed, there is little difference between them and the Iravas. Three physical anthropologists have studied very small samples of the Iravas and have pigeon-holed them in three different ways. A sample of fifty or a hundred individuals is too small for a vast caste numbering nearly two million, and therefore, the sociologist naturally feels diffident in accepting the racial filiations suggested on the basis of such scanty data. The agricultural serfs appear darker and shorter due to exposure and harder conditions of life, but are not racially distinct from the Nayars or the Iravas. On a consideration of the small range of physical differences between castes of various ranks, one comes to the conclusion that caste distinctions in Malabar at least are not based on distinctions of race. If the microscopic Brahman minority is eliminated from the social picture, we see great physical uniformity in the people of Malabar. Caste must have been there even before the Brahman came and complicated it. How it worked will be shown in the section on caste (p.).

Though culturally and linguistically one unit, politically the Malabar coast is under three different administrations, the British and the two native states, Cochin and Travancore (*see* the map). The area governed by the British is known as British Malabar District or simply as Malabar District. The Maharajahs of Cochin and Travancore are descended from ancient chieftains. The great Zamorin of Calicut who was the lord of the country that roughly corresponded to modern Malabar District was subjugated by Tippu Sultan of Mysore and so his descendants lost sovereign power before the English annexed Malabar from Tippu. There is still a titular Zamorin, but he is no more than a landlord.

EARLY CONTACTS WITH THE WEST.

The early contacts of Malabar with the countries of the west from the earliest time to the coming of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English form one of the most interesting chapters in her history. It was her pepper and spices that attracted foreigners to Malabar from the beginnings of maritime intercourse between India and the occident. Muziris (modern Cranganore in Cochin State), the most ancient sea-port of Malabar was well-known

to the Greeks and to the Egyptians. The Periplus of Arrian, an Alexandrian Greek (1st century, A.D.) wrote about the large ships laden with pepper and betel that frequented this port. His list of imports and exports from Muziris are interesting :

Imports.—Specie. Plain cloth. Flowered robes. Stibium, a pigment for the eyes. Coral. White glass, copper or brass. Tin and lead. Wine. Sandarach. Arsenic.

Exports.—Pepper. Precious stones, diamonds. Pearls. Ivory. Fine silks. Jacinths. Tortoise shell.

Of the exports, it is said that the silk came from China. The intercourse between Rome and Malabar is better known to history. Hoards of Roman coins frequently dug up from several parts of South India are a proof of the fact that there was a regular drain of Roman gold into India. It is also well-known that there was a Roman colony, a temple of Augustus and a Roman garrison at Cranganore. According to the evidence contained in the accounts of several Roman writers, the volume of trade between Malabar and Rome was quite considerable.

There were Syrian Christian settlements in the coastal towns of Malabar in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Byzantine monk, Cosmos Indicopleustes, who visited Malabar in the year 522 A.D. wrote of the Christians of "*Male* where the pepper grows." Logan thinks that European Christianity must have been influenced by the early contact with India. "It is certain," writes Logan "that Indian ideas and practices contributed largely to the form which orthodox Christianity in the West finally adopted. Monasteries and nunneries, tonsures, rosaries, confession and celibacy all seem to have found their way to Europe from Indian sources."

With the rise of the Mohammedan power in the east, the trade with India passed from the hands of the Europeans into those of the Arabs and there it remained till the coming of the Portuguese seven centuries later. Cheraman Perumal, the last of the emperors of Malabar, is believed to have become a convert to Islam, and dividing his kingdom among his friends and relatives, is supposed to have gone on pilgrimage to Mecca. The Zamorin of Calicut was the son of the Perumal, and the Rajah of Cochin his direct matrilineal heir. The Zamorin encouraged the Arabs in all possible manner by granting them special concessions for trade, colonisation, religious conversion and propaganda. The Arabs mixed freely with the fisherfolk of the coast and the mixed Arab-Malabar population came to be known as the Moplahs.

Calicut, the largest town in Malabar and the present headquarters of British Malabar District, was the capital of the Zamorin. In the eighth century it was a big emporium of international trade. It was from Calicut that Shaikh Ibn Batuta embarked for China. The large junks of those days had sails of mat and had sometimes as many as a thousand men on board. Both tradition and history have it that foreigners were attracted to Calicut because of the great security of trade at the port. It is said that things could be left unwatched in the open market-place and yet no one would steal it. The laws of the country were severe. "They put a thief to death for stealing a single nut or even a grain of seed of any fruit," says Ibn Batuta "and hence thieves are unknown among them ; and should anything fall from a

tree, none except its proper owner would attempt to touch it."[1] Camoens (16th Century) in his *Lusiad* extols Calicut to the skies :

> Imperial Calicut, the lordly seat
> Of the first monarch of the Indian state.
> ... ...
> And soon to Calicut's commodious port
> The fleets, deep-edging with the waves resort :
> Wide o'er the shore extend the warlike piles,
> And all the landscape round luxurious smiles.
> And now, her flag to ev'ry gale unfurled,
> She towers, the empress of the eastern world :
> (Mickle's Camoens, Bk. vii.)

Da Gama, the great Portuguese sailor landed at Calicut in the year 1498, a fateful year in the history not only of Malabar but of the whole of India. It was after this that real Indo-European trade began. The Portuguese account of the interview between Da Gama and the Zamorin is of interest as it gives us sidelights of court manners of the day, the nature of the gifts exchanged, etc. The king was a " very dark man half-naked and clothed with white cloths from the middle to the knees." He wore bracelets above his elbow set with precious stones, and necklaces of pearls with large diamond pendants. His hair was done in a knot at the top of his head, his ears were " pierced with a large hole " for ear-rings of beads. A page held a spittoon of gold and at the king's side was a Brahman " who gave him from time to time a green leaf closely folded with other things inside it which the king ate and spat into the cup."[2] Da Gama's presents to the Zamorin consisted of crimson velvet, yellow satin cloth, a chair covered with brocade, some cushions, a large mirror, some scarlet caps and knives. These presents which would have satisfied an African chief were looked on with contempt by the Zamorin, and probably their triviality was one of the causes that led to the failure of the first trade negotiations between the Zamorin and the Porutguese. The Zamorin's return presents to Da Gama were ten pieces of coloured silk, four large loaves of benzoin, fifty bags of musk, six basins of porcelain, etc. These were gifts to Da Gama personally, not for the king of Portugal. We need not go into the details of the wars between the Portuguese and the Arabs for the monopoly of trade with Malabar. All the chiefs of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore vied one with the another to attract the European traders. The Portuguese settled down at Cochin and as Cochin grew in importance the decline of Calicut started. Pepper trade was a state monopoly in those days and foreign trade in it meant more money to the rulers.

The Portuguese contact immensely benefited the trade of Malabar, but it had other far-reaching consequences besides commercial prosperity. The Portuguese were zealous

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[1] Logan, " Malabar," p. 291.

[2] Logan, *op. cit.* p. 301.

missionaries of the Christian faith, and wherever they went, they established churches, committed excesses in their zeal for conversion, and thus estranged the sympathy of the Hindus. As an integral part of their policy of imperial expansion, the Portuguese encouraged their men and officers to marry (not merely mix promiscuously with) native women. Thus beginning with an attempt to break the Moorish monopoly in the spice trade of the orient, the Portuguese came to be the first European imperial power in India, the first politically-minded missionaries of the Christian faith, and the first progenitors of the Eurasians in India.

By the end of the sixteenth century the Portuguese power declined and the Dutch, and afterwards the French and the English appeared on the Indian scene. In 1615 Captain Keeling with three English ships arrived off Calicut and concluded a trade treaty with the Zamorin, ten persons were left at Calicut to found a factory, but the Zamorin showed scant courtesy to these people. In 1635, some Englishmen were allowed to settle at Cochin, and this year " pepper was for the first time exported to England direct from Malabar." The English wisely refrained from fighting and interfering with the religious faiths of the people they traded with ; in fact they made good use of the lessons from the failure of the Portuguese and the Dutch. As the early English traders had very little protection given by armaments from England, they had to live under the protection of native rulers, come into close contact with them and their subjects, and understand them better. Trade was their only interest and it continued to be so even for a few years after they had become masters of Malabar. The earliest English settlements were at Rattera and Brinjan in Travancore, and at Ponnani and Calicut in the Zamorin's territory ; later they had fortified factories at Tellicherry and Anjengo, and at all these places they encouraged native weavers and spinners to settle and to work for the factors, they invited native merchants to trade with them, and in all their transactions respected native sentiments and opinions, native creeds and ceremonials and the native mode of judicial procedure. Though weaving as a cottage industry is decadent on the Malabar coast, the most skilled native (Irava) weavers are still to be found near the Anjengo fort. The fine, gold-laced tissues manufactured by them on their primitive-looking looms remind one of the muslins that were exported from Malabar to satisfy the vanity of Roman matrons at the beginning of the Christian era. We have very few clear accounts of the nature of the social intercourse between the English traders of the earlier days and their native clients and neighbours. Many of the latter were employed as soldiers, watchmen, and trading agents, the half-breeds finding special favour as linguists and soldiers. We read of an English visitor being received by a junior chief and his young wife and treated to palm wine and fruits ; of the same person being visited on board his ship by another powerful prince who would not drink the wine offered by him lest he should lose his caste, but induces him to accept his hospitality for a few days during the course of which he was sent several hens, coconuts, etc. ; on the whole there is no reason to doubt that the English traders and the natives behaved towards each other in a friendly manner on a footing of equality.

There was great demand for European gold coins especially the Venetian sequins for use as ornaments. Guns were in great demand for hunting and for fighting, and the native chiefs, who were much attracted by the military drill which contributed to the efficiency of the European fighting units, employed mercenaries to train their native troops in the European style. Benches, stools and chairs which were unknown to the natives began slowly to find their way into their homes with their European names somewhat modified. Several other words such as *kapitān* (for captain), *kumpənni* (for company), *kammis* (shirt), *lānter* (for lantern), *pātiri* (for Christian preacher), have gained currency in Malayalam, while such words as coir (for Malayalam *kayar*), mango (for *mānna*), curry (for *kari*) and calico (from Malayalam, Korikot) were adopted into English. More extended borrowing of English words began to take place later on as more English goods were imported to India after the industrial revolution, and as English education spread. Except that a fillip was given to the cultivation of pepper and other spices, more gold was imported, and bazaars grew up, there were few changes in the economic and social life of the people produced as a result of the early contact with the whites. But soon important political changes of a revolutionary character took place, a Christian power replaced the Hindu Rajahs, and the readjustments to the new situation are the theme of this study.

POLITICAL HISTORY DURING THE EARLY ENGLISH PERIOD IN MALABAR.

Till the middle of the 18th century, the Hindu kings of the Malabar coast, protected on the east by the high mountains and on the west by the sea, reigned in peace, free from foreign enemies, but warring among themselves incessantly to settle petty feuds. The king's revenues were derived from a few monopolies and certain royal prerogatives; the "rulers" of the districts and the self-governing villages (p.) were loosely linked with the king, and some of them were themselves very powerful. Such a loose political organisation in which the king had to depend for his fighting strength on a militia commanded by powerful feudatories was bound to be weak and unable to resist the onslought of invaders with powerful standing armies. From the middle of the 16th century Hindu power in South India was on the decline, and Mohammedan, on the ascendant. A Mohammedan chief of Cannanore (Chirakkal taluk in Malabar) gave "the greatest affront possible to the Hindu religion by putting a golden spire on the top of one of his mosques." The Hindu chief of the area felt insulted, for only the Hindu temples were to have such spires, according to the ancient custom of the country. Strained relationship existed, therefore, in North Malabar between the two chiefs. In the south, the oppression of the Zamorin of Calicut had estranged many chiefs, particularly, the chief of Palghat, who invited the Mohammedan usurper of Mysore, Haidar Ali, to wage war against the Zamorin. Having a friendly Muslim chief and several Hindu allies, the great Mohammedan conqueror with his well-drilled army descended on Malabar from the other side of the Ghats and his forces swept across the country like a

whirl-wind. For the next twenty-five years, the country knew no peace, on account of the long wars between the Mysoreans and the English for supremacy in South India. In the course of these wars the morale of the Nayar militia had been completely broken, many chiefs fled to the south into Travancore where the Rajah was holding out against the invaders, while the Rajah of Cochin, a life-long enemy of the Zamorin had become an ally of the Mysoreans. During the Mysorean occupation of Malabar, the old political and administrative systems were completely thrown overboard and what we might call direct Government was established, military roads were made, lands were surveyed and assessed, and land revenue and other taxes collected directly. It is said that the burden of heavy taxation drove the people, including even the Moplahs (Mohammedans), into armed rebellion. The English were being assisted by the chiefs, whose Brahman followers whose persons were sacred and inviolable serving the English as spies and as canvassers of popular support. Unlike his father, Tippu, who succeeded Haidar Ali in 1784, was a fanatical Muslim who wanted to civilize the barbarians of Malabar and bestow on them the blessings of the Islamic faith. In obedience to Tippu's command, his officers forcibly converted many Hindus into Mohammedanism ; they " were circumcised and regaled with beef." Several temples were burnt down, others too difficult to be burnt were desecrated by killing cows in them. Terrible, blood-curdling stories of the Mysore wars and the atrocities of the Mohammedans are still narrated by the villagers, and still the ruins of temples destroyed by Tippu can be seen in some places. Large sections of Nayars who were forcibly converted, but reverted to Hinduism immediately after the Mysoreans withdrew from Malabar are now known as *Chelāvu* Nayars and are treated more or less as outcastes.

Fortune favoured the English, the tables were turned against Tippu, and in the year 1792, they became masters of Malabar, Cochin their feudatory, and Travancore their ally. Restoration of peace in the newly conquered district was not easy. Armed robbers and adventurers were lurking everywhere. The new administrators applied themselves to the plans for the better Government of the district in a business-like manner which won for them the confidence of the governed. The instructions to the chief magistrate were wisely worded : " . . . it is their duty to administer unbiassed justice according to ancient laws and customs, but ameliorated by our milder institutions, to respect religious opinions and established customs, . . . to preserve the rights of the superior class of subjects as far is consistent with the general good, in fine to introduce good order and Government where anarchy, oppression and distress have long prevailed." (Logan, p. 492).

To carry on the administration and to maintain the army and the civil staff involved heavy cost, to meet which the collection of revenues in the best manner was the first concern of the officers of the company. At first the native chieftains whose territorial claims had been commuted for pensions were appointed as intermediaries between the company's Government and the landholders for the collection of revenues. Each chief was to collect and remit to

the treasury a fixed sum after keeping a certain percentage of the total collections as a commission for his services. This system of revenue farming did not work satisfactorily, as the chiefs, uncertain of their future under the new administration, used their new power and position to exploit the cultivators and enrich themselves. Native Diwans were then appointed as liason officers between the chiefs and the Government. But the system proved oppressive to the people and unprofitable to the Government, and by the beginning of the last century it was replaced by the direct collection of land revenue. The native Diwans were replaced by European revenue assistants. Collector Macleod then began the work of disarming the people to make the task of governing easy. New taxes were levied, such as those on tobacco and drink. The traditional Nayar heads of the old village democracy were replaced by village officers whose chief function was the collection of taxes. The people seem to have been glad of the peace that they now began to enjoy, though it cost them their national independence, and meant heavy taxes and giving up their arms, knives and guns, and the autonomy of their villages. Tippu had already prepared the way for the British, by dealing the death-blow to the old feudalism and linking Mysore and Malabar together. In utter contrast to the constructive gradualness of the British policy in Malabar, Tippu's policy was revolutionary; he had no patience with what he thought were the barbarous customs of the people of Malabar, such as their polyandry, free sexual life, etc., which he condemned in no uncertain terms in his proclamations. And the reforms that he wanted to effect have taken place.

popularly; 77 per.

CHAPTER II—WORKING OF CASTE.

The Iravas[1] number about 2,000,000 and constitute nearly a fifth part of the population of Kerala, the Malayalam speaking country. They are known by the name "Tiya" in North Malabar, "Tandān" in the Walluvanad and Ernad taluk of South Malabar, and as "Chōvan" in the southern division north & south of ~~near~~ Cochin. A small sub-sect in North Malabar, hitherto unnoticed by census enumerators and writers on "Castes and tribes" describe themselves as "Iravas"; another an endogamous sub-caste who call themselves ~~sub-sect~~ found chiefly in the Palghat taluk of South Malabar and in the Chittur taluk of Cochin State are referred to as ~~called~~ "Irava Panikkars" to distinguish them from their neighbours, the Tandans. In Southern Cochin and in the northern division of Travancore, the term of address, "Chovan" is loosely used as the caste-name itself. Since the Tiyas of North Malabar are educationally and economically the most advanced among the Iravas, at every census, increasing numbers return themselves as Tiyas, instead of as Iravas or Tandans; and in their communal organisations "Tiya" has been tacitly accepted as the common name of the caste in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, though the Governments of the latter two states have not recognized the change in nomenclature and continue to use the old, genuine name, Irava.

All that is already known of the sociology ethnography of the Iravas has been summarised by Iyer and Thurston in their well-known volumes on "Castes and Tribes." Thurston (*op. cit.* Vol. VIII, p. 9) lumps together the Tandan sub-sect of the Iravas with the artisan Tandans of Travancore, without noticing the gulf that separates the latter from Iravas. But such an error as this is excusable in vast survey works, where the compiler's first-hand knowledge of most of his tribes could at best be meagre. Iyer dealing with a much smaller area than Thurston has less excuse for inaccuracies, but his article too contains several loose statements. To cite just one example: on pp. 315 ff. he describes in detail the philosophy of *sakti* worship, which, most of his readers, outside Malabar might be mislead to regard as a cult to which Iravas are much addicted, but the fact remains that they have little to do with it. Iyer and Thurston are, moreover, of little help in understanding the working of Irava social institutions, as they were not able to go beyond bare description based on data got by 'the question and answer' method. They have no answer for the multitude of questions the sociologist asks, such as the relationship between the Iravas and other castes and between the sub-sects of the Iravas; the influence of caste on their economic conditions; the influence of Brahmanism on the so called "animism" of the Iravas; the nature of the aspirations and ambitions of the Iravas; their social reform movements; and above all, the effects of the impact of western culture. 1-1

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[1] Ananta Krishna Iyer writes the name wrongly as "Izhuvans" Cochin Tribes and Castes, Vol. I, p. 276. Thurston (Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Vol. II, p. 392) gives the correct name, Izhavan or Ilavan, the "zh" and "l" being used as the equivalent of "ṟ" used by me. Throughout this volume, I have followed Grierson's system of transliteration.

As the Iravas are distributed over a vast area, subject to different external influences, there are also corresponding cultural differences which we shall have occasion to refer to later. They differ in such important matters as family organisation, *e.g.*, the extreme north (North Malabar) and the south (South Cochin, Travancore) are matrilineal, while the central area—South Malabar and the northern three-quarters of Cochin—is patrilineal. The cultural areas with the local names for the six major sub-groups can be thus tabulated :—

1 Northern Matrilineal ...	... (*a*) Tiyas	N. Malabar.
2 Central Patrilineal ...	... (*b*) Iravas	S. Malabar.
	(*c*) Tandans	S. Malabar and N. Cochin.
	(*d*) Irava Panikkars	Do.
3 Southern Matrilineal ...	... (*e*) Chovas	S. Cochin and Travancore.
	(*f*) Iravas	Do.

Each cultural area can more or less be regarded as being endogamous for descriptive purposes, though strictly speaking, there were minor endogamous islands present here and there, along side of the major divisions *a—f*, such as for example, matrilineal Iravas in area 1 who are distinct from their neighbours with the name "Tiya" and also from their namesakes elsewhere. All these sections are, however, linked together by many ties of which the legendary links may be briefly noticed here. The groups 2d, g, h are inferior endogamous sub-castes.

LEGENDARY HISTORY OF THE IRAVAS.

The first class of legends explains how the Iravas came from Ceylon and settled in Malabar. An ancient king of Malabar injured and insulted the artisan section of his subjects, who left his kingdom and settled in Ceylon. The king and his subjects who were hard put to it by the absence of the artisans, succeeded at last in inducing them to return with the two protectors provided by the king of Ceylon. The 'protectors' of the artisans were the ancestors of the Iravas (Iram means Ceylon, "Irava" means "Man of Ceylon"). They were allowed to capture the first pair of women they chanced to meet and make them their wives. The first captured a Brahman woman and the second a Cheruma woman ; the descendants of the former are the Tiyas and Tandans, and descendants of the latter are the Irava Panikkars. This legend has many local variations in details, regarding the cause of exodus of the artisans, the manner in which the artisans were induced to come back, and the the castes of the women who were captured by the 'protectors' from Ceylon. The function of the legend is to explain (1) the close social relationship between the artisans and the Iravas who have them under their social control ; (2) the caste name Irava ; (3) the cultural differences between the Irava and the Irava Panikkars. Ceylon and South India were more closely linked culturally and politically in prehistoric times than now, and it is therefore but natural that old legends should reflect those ties. In the folk-songs of the Panas of Kerala, a Vannan (washerman) and a Pana are supposed to have been sent to fetch the artisans, and the unhappy

(g) Malayalam Iravas
(h) Kollakkar
(i) Puyukkar (Puzhukkar)
(j) Pandi Iravas (Tamil-speakers) Nayyatinkara Chirayinkizhu
k Paachil in a village 6 miles south of Trivandrum

Kavutiyan (Irava Barber)

(Kurup) N. Malabar
Valli (Aduthon, Kurup)

relationship between the two is reflected in the proverb, " The Pana is no comrade for the Vannan."

The second story is a myth recorded in the Mackenzie collection of manuscripts in the Madras Oriental Manuscripts Library, the purport of which is to exalt the Iravas by giving them a divine origin from the god Siva and *Gandharva* women (flying celestial beauties) These nymphs were bathing in a stream one winter morning and Siva, enamoured by the bathers' charm, enticed them by transforming himself into a fire. They came and sat round the fire to warm themselves and the reproductive fire of the god entering them, they conceived and brought forth seven boys. Siva employed his sons to manufacture toddy for offering in his temple. The Brahman *pujari* (priest) of the temple, a dishonest man, used himsel to drink part of the toddy and dilute what remained with water. This was discovered and Siva's seven sons murdered the Brahman forthwith, but to kill a Brahman, even though he be thief and murderer, is one of the five great sins. Siva, therefore, punished his sons by lowering them from their divine status to that of the low-castes. The palm trees would no longer bend down for the extraction of toddy as they did of old, but the brothers had to climb up laboriously to the top. These seven brothers, who were polyandrous by the way, are, according to the legend, the ancestors of the Iravas.

The origin of this legend is of interest, but few know it except some members of the Irava caste. It is based on " *Soundikolpatti*," a work in the puranic (Indian epic) style, caused to be written by some Iravas of South Malabar a few decades ago. Needless to say it is a recent fiction, but it is of interest in showing how legends are invented. Many South Indian castes are known to get similar histories written to exalt their origin and very little reliance is to be placed on them in tracing the history of cultures. The legend, " Soundikolpatti " rationalises and tries to give a meaning to the caste names " Tiya " and " Irava." " *Tī* " means fire, and " Tiya " means " he of the fire " or " fire-born." " Irava " resembles " Eruva " which means " the seven." Since the seven brothers of the legend were born to Siva in the form of fire, those who created the legend had both the caste names explained at once, and in addition to it, established the oneness of the different sections of the community.

The name " Tiya " has been used as a handle for other fanciful theories of origin. Since the legends say that Iravas came to Kerala from Ceylon, Tiya is a corrupt form of *Dvīya* or Islander, the island here being Ceylon. I have no doubt that this is wrong, though almost every writer on the Iravas or Tiyas has harped upon the equation, Tiya=Islander. " Tiyar " (plural of Tiya) is derived from Tigaru, the name by which the Canarese call the Tamils, and by which Northerners who came to Malabar probably called the indigenous people of Kerala.

The coconut tree and the Iravas are closely associated. The planting of coconut and the manufacture of various articles from it have been their monopoly from time immemorial.

They are believed to have brought the nuts from Ceylon when they migrated into Kerala. It has been more or less proved now that coconut was introduced into India by Polynesians or Indonesians, but whether the Irava had anything to do with it will remain a matter for conjecture for the antiquarian.*

That the Iravas as a caste had a better status than now is proved by many scattered bits of history available from various parts of Kerala and even outside Kerala. "The Kadamba Kings of Mysore," says Iyer, "must have belonged to the toddy drawing caste."[1] According to H. A. Stuart (Census of India, 1891) the toddy drawing sect formed "an important element in the fighting forces of the Hindu Kingdoms of the south."

In North Malabar there was the well-known Irava ruler, the Mannanar of Eruvassi, the ruins of whose palace (plate i, fig. 2) can still be seen at the foot of the Ghats on the borders of Coorg. Of the Mannanar, Aiyer merely says, "It is said that they had a chief named Mannanar, a Tiya baron."[2] Mannanar is no myth. The widow and children of the last Mannanar are still living near Tellicherry. In one of the rooms in the ruins I saw rusty swords and shields, and various articles used in worship ; near the palace were the ruins of the family temple dedicated to the mother-goddess. The gigantic *Alstonia scholaris* under which the crude stone representing the ancestor-god, Muttappan, can be seen in plate (fig.) The old woman on the left who had seen the last of the Mannanars alive wept when she narrated to me the story of the conspiracies that led to his death, some say murder. It is reported that some Nayar landlords, jealous of the power and influence of the Mannanar, poisoned him. The Mannanar left no matrilineal heirs and custom required that only a Brahmin virgin who is outcasted should be adopted. Such a virgin was obtained and married by a Tiya, but she died before she could give birth to an heir. Meanwhile the Raja of Chirakkal obtained control of the estate of the Mannanar.

Many upper caste families and families of Iravas in Malabar and Travancore behave as though they are kin. The Iravas were employed as soldiers, just as the Nayars were, by Rajas, the well-known instance being the Raja of Ambalapura in Travancore. The *Keralolpatti*, which purports to be a history of the "Origin of Malabar" says that formerly the Iravas, like the Nayars, polluted the Brahmins only by contact, but not through the atmosphere.

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES.

As it is impossible to understand the nature of Iravan society without knowing something of the village organisation in the past and at present, a brief account has to be given of it here.

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* Prof. Craighill Handy (Bishop Museum, *Occasional papers*, IX, 8) and Dr. J. H. Hutton (Census of India, 1931, I) find many cultural connections between Polynesia and the West Coast of India. The outrigger canoes of Malabar and Ceylon are made special mention of by Handy.

[1] Iyer, Tribes and Castes of Cochin, Vol. I, p. 279.

[2] *Op.* cit. p. 280.

The ***tara*** or ***deśam*** was the political and administrative unit of Malabar right up to the time of the British occupation and was the equivalent of the ***ūr*** or the village of the east coast of South India. The head of the ***tara*** was the Nayar ***deśavāri***, who had four main functions, (*a*) the direction of the religious ceremonies of the village pagodas ; (*b*) the management of the lands and men belonging to the temple ; (*c*) the direction of all ceremonies in the village ; and (*d*) maintenance of law and order. It was only at such places where there was no hereditary ***deśavāri*** that the Raja appointed an officer called ***pravartikār*** or manager. The ***deśavāri*** did not have to bother himself about revenue collection, as no taxes were levied by the kings, but he had to collect fines, and other royal dues which were but few. The ***deśavāri*** was the captain of the village militia which had to march to battle at the royal command.

The village assembly was called ***kūttam***[1], the heads of all joint families being members of it. We do not have sufficient historical data on the functions of the ***kūttam***, but it is believed to have exercised considerable control in the direction of the affairs of the village. No man could be turned out of the village or executed without the village assembly permitting it. Several villages together formed a ***nad*** or district under a ***nāduvāri*** who was but a larger edition of the ***deśavāri***. The district assembly was known as ***nāttu-kūttam***, which met rarely, but it is said the district assemblies were "a representative body of immense power which, when necessity existed, set at naught the authority of the Raja."

The ***tara*** is no longer a functioning unit in the present day administrative and political machinery. Since the English took charge of the administration of Malabar, it became imperative that the newly levied taxes should be collected promptly and economically, for which several ***deśams*** were rolled into one amsam and placed in the charge of a headman or ***adhikāri***. The adhikaris were, some of them, ***deśavāris*** of the old regime, but others were ordinary citizens. So there was the anomalous situation of one ***deśāvari*** being placed over two or three of his peers and their people, or of an ordinary subject becoming an administrator and his quondam superior and ruler being reduced to a position of political and administrative insignificance.

An Irava, under the Hindu regime, could not even dream of becoming a ***deśavāri***, but under the new dispensation about half a dozen of them became ***adhikāris*** in British Malabar District. The ***adhikāri's*** office is now, more or less, hereditary and carries a small honorarium, but it is a very important administrative post, for apart from his main duty of collecting taxes, he is the village judge, police officer, and the link between all the Government departments and the villagers. In addition to dethroning several village chiefs the new system did considerable harm by putting an end to an admirable system of village democracy. One ***adhikāri*** could not effectively fill the role of the natural leaders of the compact ***taras***.

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[1] ***Kuttam*** nowadays means "a horde," "dispute" or "discussion."

In Cochin and Travancore, the Rajas, in order to strengthen themselves, were interested, towards the middle of the eighteenth century in depriving the *deśavāris* of their military powers, and having standing armies in the place of the old-fashioned Nayar militia. When the State began to levy taxes, *pārvatyakar* (village managers) with *menons* (accountants) had to be appointed. Thus, when the need for centralised government arose in Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore, the village rulers and village councils gave way to members of bureaucracies.

It cannot, however, be said that all relics of the old *taras* have totally disappeared. The word itself is used in the old sense when referring to a local group of any particular caste. For settlement of caste disputes, even now, the "elders of the tara" meet in council and pass orders. The families of old *deśavāris* continue to have the control of the village temple, its men and estates, and organise the festivities much in the same way as of yore. For the communal religious activities of the village, people of all castes make contributions of service or goods in the traditional way. The *deśavāris*, wherever they still continue to be influential, are the unofficial judges[1] in disputes especially in caste matters (*see* section on Law). Managers of temples are even now called *ūrālan* (ruler of the village), a term which shows that once the management of the temple was a part of the duties of the *deśavāris*.

In the unsettlement hat followed political changes, these functionaries, the *adhikari* in Malabar District, *parvatyakar* in Cochin state, and *kariakkar* in Travancore state, were given to corruption, bribery and other abuses. The official language was English and anyone with a smattering of English had great advantages over those who knew only Malayalam. Official corruption was so rampant in Travancore that we had the spectacle of the Dewan-Resident, Col. Munro, going about and punishing erring officials with the cat-o'-nine-tails. The new village officers were a sort of a cross between the old *deśavāri* and a public servant. Whereas the former was the organiser of all major activities of village life, the leader of the people, and the channel through which they communicated with the higher powers, the new *adhikāri* was a servant, in fact, of the English administrators, little interested in the village and having no powers comparable to those of the old office. The tendency is for the office of the *adhikāri* to approximate more and more to that of a subordinate official, with such functions as are purely administrative, and not at all social. Men of intelligence and considerable influence, who became *adhikāris* in the earlier years of British rule, most often used their office to profit themselves and their friends. But as the masses of people grew more accustomed to the new system of administration, they are less prone to misuse their powers.

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[1] In backward rural villages, the families of *desavāris* try, even now, to exercise their feudal authority of fining offenders, and maintaining caste regulations. In one village near Vadakkancheri in Cochin state, a Nayar *desavāri* fined an Irava Rs. 135 for filing a suit against another without getting his permission first; on his refusing to pay the fine the Nayar issued an order prohibiting him the use of the village tank used by the Iravas.

The *desavāri's* permission has to be got for marriages, for tiling houses, etc.

In spite of the anxiety of the Directors of the East India Company to see that the native social and political organisation should not be disturbed, it was found impossible in Malabar District to make use, politically, of the old ruling chiefs, the *nāduvāris* and *deśavāris*. Tippu Sultan after his invasion had already begun the task of direct administration through an official bureaucracy in Malabar District, and Cochin and Travancore also, in the course of strengthening themselves, had to abolish the *deśavāri* system. Village republics thrived when there was no need for a strong central Government and no fear of foreign invasions. When a foreign Government was imposed upon the people, it was found easier to govern through their own agents than through the natural leaders of the prople.

Regret is felt by many people for the old village assemblies that were overlooked by the administrations in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore and have now disappeared for ever. According to them, these assemblies could have been made the starting point for an admirable system of local government, instead of the modern elected village *panchayat* (council of five) which has both judicial and municipal functions such as the maintenance of village roads, wells, etc. The village *panchayats* are in their experimental stage and it is too early to say whether they will be a success or not. The present day councils are, however, radically different from the old *kūttams* in that (*a*) the members are elected and may be of any caste, not necessarily Nayars, as of old ; (*b*) the functions are extremely limited and do not extend to religion, or caste, or any group activities ; (*c*) they cannot raise their own funds, but have to get grants from the Governments ; (*d*) that they are supervised by *panchayat* officers and by the local courts.

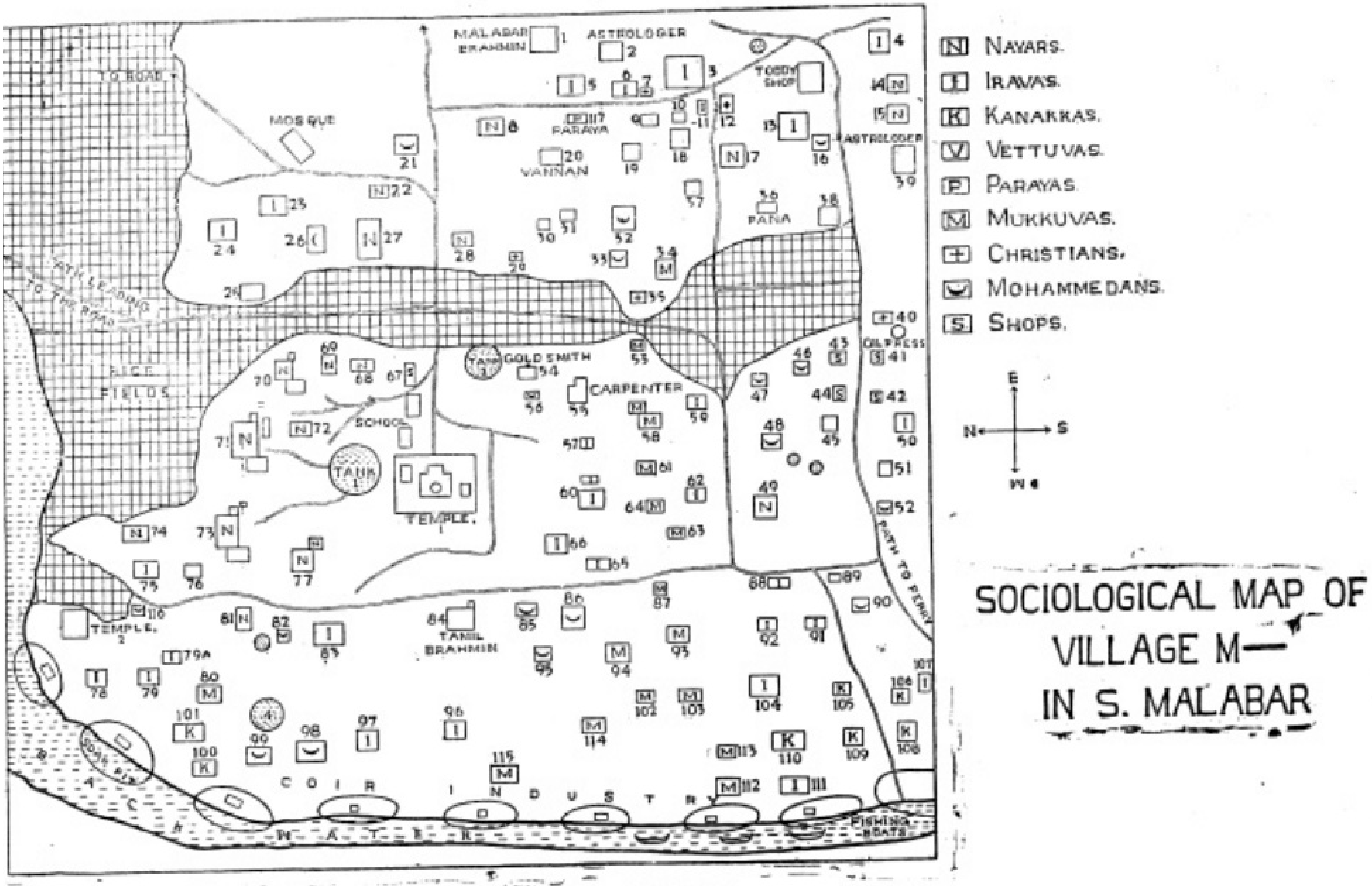
The *kūttam* was closely linked with caste, as the Nayars, the caste of soldiers *par excellence*, were the only people represented on it. The Iravas and the Mohammedans, who were numerous everywhere, were not members of the *kūttam*, their headmen or *pramāṇi*, being only consulted as occasion arose for joint action or in the settlement of disputes. But since the coming of the English, the Nayars ceased to be the protectors of the land, caste began to break down and it was doubtful if the *kūttam* could continue to function. There is no use speculating on whether it could have survived the shock of conquest and imperialism, for we have its disappearance as an accomplished fact, though at least in Malabar District, it was not the original intention of the English Administrators to interfere with the institutions and privileges of the people. The *adhikāris* were intended to be the analogues of the old *deśavāris* and so were bestowed with wide powers. But in this their expectations were not fulfilled, for, while the revenues were collected well, life in the villages degenerated for want of leadership. Natural leadership was replaced by sterile officialdom.

From the point of view of the Iravas and others of the lower caste group, the disappearance of the old village councils, and the powers of the upper castes has been a means of social emancipation, though they had, like others, to suffer on account of the low morals of subordinate officialdom that replaced the old village government.

A VILLAGE AND ITS CASTES.

Though the relationship between different groups in villages have changed considerably in the course of the last four generations, the villages themselves have changed very little. One village differs very little from another, but yet, depending on whether it is along the coast or in the interior, there are points of difference in the level of the culture and the nature of the economic activities of the people. Along the coast are big towns, the chief industrial and educational centres, while the interior remains more rural and agricultural. In the coastal villages, modern industries connected with the coconut support a large population for whom rice cultivation is only of secondary importance. The industrial workers have more money, while the agriculturists of the interior produce more to eat, but have less money for fineries to make themselves attractive. " In the west (*i.e.*, along the coast) women, in the east (interior) the soil ", so runs the common saying which means that along the coast, the women are more attractive, while the soil is more productive in the interior than along the coast, where coconut alone thrives well. People have less leisure and heavier work to do in the interior. " I won't give my daughter to a man from the east (interior) ", says the fond mother, " she will have to die of hard work, weeding, reaping, and cleaning the stables." The standard of cleanliness of the men of the interior is comparatively low and is again made the subject of ridicule. The differences are, however, exaggerated in the above statements.

We shall presently make a survey of a village in South Malabar District. The bus that takes the anthropologist from Trichur (see map, plate xii) deposits him near the coastal village M ———— (text fig. 2) to reach which he has to walk the distance of a furlong and a half along the bunds of paddy fields, through shady coconut gardens and along water courses between compounds. If it is the rainy season, he wades for considerable distances through the water. Everywhere he sees the riotous verdure of rice, ragi, legumes, tapioca and other food plants. If it is the dry season after the rains, say January, there is the blazing sun, vegetation is all scorched, except for the bigger trees and shrubs and the kitchen gardens and gardens of cucurbitaceous plants in some fields which are carefully watered, or such subsidiary crops as *gingeli* which require very little water. He meets with Mohammedans going about selling fish which they carry in baskets slung on poles placed athwart their shoulders, or fisherwomen carrying loads of fish on their heads. When he comes to the sacred old *Ficus religiosa* tree, in the middle of the fields, he is in the heart of the village, for the tree marks the end of the ***nada*** or procession path of the village temple dedicated to the mother goddess, Durga, the consort of Siva. This temple is, in many ways, the hub of the village. Most of the lands in the village are the freehold property of the temple. The greatest annual event in the village is the ***pūram*** festival at the temple celebrated in the Malayalam month, ***Minam*** (April-May). The most fervent prayers are addressed to the goddess Durga by the unsophisticated section of the villagers. They make thanksgiving offerings on the



SOCIOLOGICAL MAP OF VILLAGE M— IN S. MALABAR

TEXT FIG. 2

occasion of birth days, marriage, etc., and get the purificatory water from the temple for all ceremonies, and refer to it as " our ***ampalam*** " (temple).

The backwater that bounds the village on the west and the north (text fig. 2) is very important in its economic life. It is narrow for the most part, but broadens into a big lagoon on the north. Further south the backwater, which the villagers call their " river ", joins the sea at Chettuvayi, once a strategic place, where the Dutch had a fort from which they commanded the interior. The " river " and its banks present a busy scene throughout the day and night. The fishermen do most of their work in the evenings and at night, and the noise of tapping on the side of their dug-outs, by which they attract fish, can often be heard breaking the stillness of the night. On the banks of the river are dozens of men and women engaged in the various stages of the manufacture of coir-ropes, such as soaking the coconut in pits near the bank, opening others that have retted husks, beating the fibre out on heavy wooden planks with sticks of the wood of the bastard sago palm (plate ii, fig. 1), and drying the fibre and spinning it into coir or coconut yarn for export through Cochin. ***Changadams*** (large boats made of planks sewn together) loaded with coir or the fibre are punted by men of the fishermen or Kanakka caste about sixty miles to Cochin, where it is sold, and the boats return to the village with Rangoon rice, tapioca, salt, etc. The actual spinning is done in thatched sheds, mostly by women, and by girls and boys who are too genteel or too small for harder jobs. The prosperity of the village depends mostly on this industry by which the more enterprising of the villagers become rich. The capital that is required is small, and given the initiative and the capacity it is possible to start one's own business employing a few hands every day on the daily wage or piece work basis. The relationship between the employer and the employee is easy and pleasant, castes and sexes mingle freely, and kill the tedium of long hours of hard work by singing and story-telling.

Even in the small groups of workers at themany coir-sheds one is able to notice differences in dress, manner of speech and behaviour between individuals, both men and women. Among the women may be seen some wearing very tight-fitting bodices, multi-coloured loin cloths and a piece of cotton cloth covering their heads. These are Moplahs[1] (Mohammedans) of the poorer families, the more well-to-do women being ***purdah*** (secluded). Their way of talking Malayalam is characterised by several mannerisms which are peculiar to them and can justifiably be called " Moplahisms ". The Moplah men can be distinguished from others by their clean shaven heads, their skull caps and by their peculiar way of tucking the corner of the lion cloth on the left instead of the right side. They are even said to have a peculiar smell, known as the Moplah odour, which arises from the rather dirty habit of some of them not washing their sweat-smelling lion cloths at sufficiently frequent intervals. The Mohammedan women have smaller holes in their ear lobes for ornaments, but they have

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[1] The correct Malayalam word is *Mappila*, but since " Moplah " has gained currency in English writings, using the correct word may be regarded as pedantic.

numerous holes in the helix of the ear for metal rings, but the men, unlike the Hindu men, have unpierced ears. Of the remaining women, again, by the test of speech alone, other groups can be separated : those women, who substitute the syllable *ma* where they ought to have *va*, can be taken to belong to the Mukkuva (fishermen) caste. Some of the older of the Mukkuva women have blue loin cloths, and have just one hole in the helix of the ear for ornaments. Only the younger women cover their breasts with a bodice known as *ravukka* (plate iii, fig. 2), the older ones either exposing them or having a piece of cloth thrown loosely on the shoulders so as to cover the breasts. Resembling the Mukkuva women closely are the Kanakka women. Purer in speech, cleaner in dress, and wearing only white clothes are the Irava women. Among them, also, only the younger women cover their breasts, while the older are semi-nude (plate ii, fig. 3 ; plate v ; plate vi, fig. 2). While the Mohammedans do not regard themselves polluted by touching others, the Hindu men and women of each caste have to be careful not to be touched by those below them in caste gradation. So, such of the Irava women who want to be " pure " and not to be put to the necessity of bathing after work, say to the fisher or Kanakka women, " Don't touch me, I cannot bathe this evening ".

Among the men the obvious differences between caste groups are slight, but the language differences hold good as in the case of the women. That the standards of correct speech and cleanliness rise in proportion to the caste status can be accepted as a valid generalisation with regard to the mass of people.

We have so far seen only one part of the village. Taking a walk along one of the many foot paths—there are no roads here—one sees more of the village. The bigger houses are mostly of the Nayars or the Mohammedans, only a couple of the Iravas having two-storied houses in the village. The distribution of the various castes is shown in text fig. 2, which shows how complexly sub-divided is human society in this sample of Malabar. It is not possible to show in a diagram the further atomisation of each of the castes. Before proceeding further with the description of the village, the castes that are included in the village had better be enumerated. House 1 is of a Namputiri, or Malabar Brahman, family. 84 is of a very rich family of Pattars (Tamil Brahmans), having usury as their trade through which most of the tenant proprietors (*Kāṇa-kudians*, see the section on Land Tenure) have become the Pattars' debtors. The Tamil Brahmans are comparatively recent immigrants, having their language and customs different from those of the Namputiri Brahmans of Malabar, but they are claiming, and in most places getting the same social privileges enjoyed by the indigenous Brahmans.

Next to the Brahmans are the Nayars. The matrilineal joint families, 8, 70, 71 73 in the map in text fig. 2, belong to one *tarvād*. A member of the joint family 70, the most outstanding individual the village ever had, was an unscrupulous person, who according to the report of the villagers, became the *adhikari* of the neighbouring village and made use of his

position and influence with the officials to enrich himself by all unfair means. Because of his great influence, he heard disputes at his house, punished offenders by fining them or having them tied to a tree and beaten, and dragged the more assertive of the villagers to the police station on concocted charges and had them punished, the new legal machinery being too complex and ineffective to get at the truth. He ended his life in misery, and mentally deranged, which people considered was divine punishment, a vindication and a proof of justice reigning on earth. One of the younger women of this house 70, is the hypergamous wife of the Canarese Brahman priest of the temple i and another the wife of a Tamil Brahman youth of house 84. A younger member of the Namputiri house 1, has a daughter of the Nayar house 71, and another from a near-by village her elder sister, as their wives. These instances are given to show that the Brahmans and Nayars though separated by an unbridged gulf in religious and most social matters are yet united by the tie of sex, which cannot be called marriage, but is at the same time more respectable than concubinage, since sexual association with Namputiris is not only coveted by the Nayars, but is in some cases obtained by the Namputiri mate being paid an honorarium by the Nayar woman's relatives. The temple of the village used to be managed by the members of houses, 17, 49, and another clan of Nayars on the other bank of the backwater, who with another clan now extinct, made the four ***uralans*** (literally, " rulers of the village ") ; they looked after the affairs of the temple, the estate, etc., organised the periodical feeding of Brahmans, and conducted the annual festivals. Every tenant proprietor who held the temple lands either directly or indirectly had to make payments in cash and in goods, *e.g.*, oil for lighting, plaited palm leaves for thatching the outhouses of the temple, rice for feasts, and firewood or coconuts for use in the kitchen, etc. Further voluntary subscriptions were also collected for the temple festivals. The surplus income from the temple revenues goes to the ***uralans***. The legality of their appropriating funds, most of which come from the public, is being widely discussed.

The houses mentioned above constitute the Nayar aristocracy of the village and are treated with respect by others, though most of them have been reduced to comparative poverty by reckless borrowing from Tamil Brahman usurers. The joint families, 68, 69, 77 are families of Nayar commoners, with whom the aristocrats freely mingle, interdine and have morganatic marriages knowon as ***sambandham*** (lit " relationship "). There are yet other families, such as 14, 15, 28 who are regarded very inferior, with whom the aristocrats will not eat, and with whose women they may mate only rarely, but then they do not allow the wives to enter their family kitchen. This prohibition, however, is not a great inconvenience, since marriage is matrilocal with the husband visiting his wife every night. Still lower to these commoners among the Nayars is another sub-caste namely, the Veluttedan (lit., " man of the whitening place "= washerman), which was represented in the village by one family that used to live in house 72, but has now left the place. The Nayar barber, or " man who brightens the head " from the adjoining village visits the Nayar families periodically. The

Nayar barber and Nayar washerman serve only the Nayars and the Brahmans and the "intermediate" castes between these two, but do not work for lower castes such as Iravas.

I have dealt above with a few of the subdivisions of the Nayars in a small local group, in order to show that social division within the Nayar caste is based on certain values attached to forms of economic (and sometimes ritual) activities. As will be shown in the case also of other castes, for each locality the fundamental basis of sub-castes is work and its social valuation.

Immediately below the Nayars come the Iravas who are mostly free labourers, some farmers, and a few engaged in the manufacture of palm wine from the coconut and the bastard sago (*Caryota urens*) palms. The majority of the Iravas of this village are engaged in the coir industry, either as small capitalists, or as wage labourers. Those that are farmers have coconut gardens and rice fields which they hold on subordinate ***kanam*** tenancy or on lease. Rice cultivation is of little moment in this village as the area under rice is small and the soil very poor, so the farmers have to supplement agriculture by industrial pursuits. Details of the economic activities and internal organisation need not be referred to here, as they are dealt with in detail below (p).

Closely linked with the Iravas by tradition, and of considerable importance in the economic enterprises of the village, is the next caste of *Kammālas* or artisans. No. 54 is the house of the village goldsmith, and 55 of the village carpenter. The artisan caste is made up of four professional groups, the goldsmith, carpenter, blacksmith and the brazier. In village M— the last two are not represented. The blacksmith of the village to the south has our village also as one of the group of three villages included in his parish. These four artisan groups are strictly speaking one, inter-dining and inter-marriage being permitted, but usually the carpenter marries from another family of carpenters. Members of these groups address each other as though they were of a kinship group, an elderly man being addressed as uncle or brother and so forth. These artisans have their rights and duties with reference to the village and all its institutions. In the old pre-British days each of these artisan families had considerable work which they did periodically and get paid at the harvest time, for example, repairing the agricultural tools, supplying the households with ladles, low stools, knives, etc., on the occasion of important festivals. An artisan may work for wages anywhere, but the periodical traditional work for each village can be done only by the artisan of that village. This again is undoubtedly a relic of the old self-contained autonomous *tara* system. Thus in the carpenters household in our village, when the old carpenter died, and there were none to make the ladles and other articles, his widow engaged a man to do the work and she distributed them.

For the traditional duties thus performed, the artisans receive gifts in return at the time of the annual festivals and at the harvests, when a few sheaves of rice are set apart by the agriculturists for the artisans. The artisans are a clean and literate people, conservative and averse to change.

Another village functionary, represented by a single family, 39, is the Panikkar, Kaniyan or village astrologer. Kelukutti Panikkar is the most learned[1] man in the village, barring the temple priest referred to above. He is one of the few who knows Sanskrit and astrology, which, for generations, members of his caste have been studying. Before the English schools displaced the village schools of old, the Kaniyan men and women taught the three R's to the children of the villagers of all castes from the Iravas downwards. (Nayars have their own village school masters.) Boys used to be taught fencing, archery, etc., in those early years when every individual was expected to defend himself. Girls were taught dances and songs which were the most important feminine accomplishments. Now the educational part of the Kaniyan's work is inconsiderable (see chapter on Education), but the other part, namely, astrology remains his mainstay. To prescribe the auspicious hour for ceremonies, to help in finding the supernatural cause of diseases, to prophesy events with the help of astrology, the Kaniyan is greatly in demand. To the Kaniyan's personal name is added the title " Panikkar ", but he is usually addressed by the title only. Though low in caste status, he is revered by all. His disciples of those classes, *e.g.*, the Iravas and artisans, who are of superior caste status, but can touch him without being polluted, salute him when they meet him, by bending and touching his feet, while he blesses them saying "***nannāy varatte***" ("come good "). On the ***Vishu*** day in April, the astrologer goes to every house in the village announcing to them the forecast for the coming year, whether it is going to be a prosperous year, whether there will be too much or too little of rain and pestilence, who the presiding deity of the year is, etc. For this service the householders of the village give him presents of rice and vegetables and some times clothes. In conformity with his learned profession the Panikkar, tall, bald-headed and bespectacled, is one of the most distinguished-looking individuals in the village, and his two wives are the most cultured of the women, graceful in their manners, dress and appearance.

The next caste is that of the washerman or the ***Vannan*** (house 20). There is only one family of Vannan for this and the two adjoining villages. Washing is only one of the many functions of the Vannan, so that the translation of the caste name into English is apt to be misleading[2]. As the high castes, Brahmans and Nayars, have Nayar washermen, the Vannan washes for the Iravas, the Kammalas and Kaniyans, but not for castes below who have to do their own washing. In the pre-British days payment of washing used to be made only at the harvest time and during festival seasons, and then in kind, but now it is becoming the custom to pay wages in cash on delivery. The Vannan specialises in the ritual songs and

tailoring, specially stitching pillow cases, cotton-stuffed beds, was another speciality of the Vannan

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[1] Learned in the traditional lore of the Hindus. When referring to recent changes, mention will be made of the English educated people of the village.

3 [2] This correction applies to all other castes also, *e.g.*, the astrologer caste is also a caste of teachers for at least one half of the village population.

2 ~~The~~ etymologically word should be ~~the~~ Mannan. ~~The Vadi~~ In ancient times washing was done by using detergent earth (munnu) from which the caste got its name. ~~The~~ modern Malayalis ignorant of the derivation of the word made it Vannan under the impression the washerman

is somehow concerned
with colour (varna)! In making all

dances (plate viii, figs. 1, 2) sacred to the mother goddess of Cranganore in the Cochin state and goes from house to house with his musical instrument *Nantuni* singing the songs which are supposed to bring prosperity and security to the householders. His services are requisitioned to perform the rituals to placate the goddess. He combines, sometimes, the practice of medicine and magic with washing. He performs the fire dance in Iravan temples ; dressed in shamanistic robes, he goes about the village and informs the villagers of the date fixed for the festivities in the temple ; and sometimes he gives shamanistic performances (plate viii, fig. 1). In ceremonies connected with the first menstruation of girls he has his active share. Women in menses, in order to purify themselves after the three days' seclusion, have to get a newly washed loin cloth from the Vannan woman, and wrap it around their waste before bathing on the fourth day. This newly washed loin cloth is known as ***mārru*** (lit., " change ") and is of great significance in the sociology of Malabar (for details see p. below).

The *Pāṇa* (village musician) comes next to the Vannan. There is, again, only one family of this caste in the village. Velandi, a tall, lean, bent old man is the village musician, his instruments being the double headed drum (***cheṇda***), the pipe (***kural***) and the hand drum (***udukku***). His wife and he are both proficient in the legendary Pana songs and in simple magical spells and rites, especially those meant to protect children, crops, cattle, and fishermen's and artisans' tools from the effects of the evil eye. Before the ***onam***, the national festival of Malabar, the Pana, with his wife, goes from house to house during the early hours of the morning to sing the ***tukiluṇarttu-pāttu*** (" song for waking up ") which brings prosperity to the householders through the blessing of Siva and Parvati. Every member of the household puts a few coins into the piece of cloth spread in front of the Pana when his name is introduced into the line of song asking him to " wake up." Again, when the ***onam*** festivities are about to close, the Pana and his wife or daughter regale the villagers with their songs and dance. Some Panas specialize in sorcery and are regarded as dangerous and uncanny.

We have already seen two of the next lower castes, the Mukkuvas (fishermen) and the Kanakkas in our survey of the coir-sheds on the bank of the " river ". The Mukkuvas are not socially linked with most of the castes mentioned above. The Vannan does not wash for them ; the Kaniyan teaches Mukkuva children, and gives them the benefit of his knowledge of astrology, but he does not carry his annual customary forecasts to the fishermens' household, just as the Kammalas do not make customary gifts to them. The Mukkuvas, linked to the water, are isolated from these village functionaries. The Kanakkas were formally engaged in the manufacture of salt, but since it became a government monopoly, they have become boatmen. They are, strictly speaking, a caste that pollutes the Iravas and Kammalas, through the atmosphere, but here, the Iravas observe only pollution on contact (***tottu kuli*** or " touching-bathing ").

The lowest caste in the area is the *Vettuvan*,(hunter), who are more or less "serfs" or unfree labourers attached to the various Nayar households. When the latter fell on evil days, they have taken up work under the more well-to-do Mohammedans and Iravas. They are primarily engaged in the work of plucking coconuts, plaiting thatch, and ploughing the gardens and fields. Hard work has blessed them with strong bodies. These people correspond in status and in position to the Cherumas (plate i, fig. 4) of the interior villages.

The Nayadis*, the lowest of the castes in Malabar are not found in this village, but they come occasionally to beg.

Having briefly enumerated the castes of the village, we shall see the kind of behaviour between the individuals and groups of the Iravas on the one hand, and those of their neighbouring castes, either superior or inferior to them in status, on the other. Caste usages being hierarchical, I expect a man inferior to me in caste status to behave towards me in the same manner as I behave towards one of a superior caste. The most important regulation in the social intercourse, between individuals of different castes, is the tabu based on considerations of personal purity ; this will be better analysed in a later section (p).

The photograph (plate i, fig. 3) shows the way in which an Irava gives food to a Nayadi beggar, who has withdrawn after placing his bowl on the bund of the rice-plot to wait till the kind gentleman has poured the food into it. It is only when the Irava has gone back about 40-50 feet, that the beggar picks up his bowl. When an Irava has to transact some business with a Nayar at the latter's house , he has to do so at a distance, just as the Nayadi has at an Irava house.

Any large assemblage of men in Malabar invariably reveals the main lines of cleavage of Malabar society. Let us watch a crowd on the occasion of the great annual *pūram* festival at the village temple i (text fig. 2) in the month of *Mīnam* (April-May). By noon the whole neighbourhood of the temple is filled with men and women of several of neighbouring villages. Vendors of sweets and trinkets have their little shops, and children are busy buying toys and sweets, and the women, coloured threads, beads, wooden ear-ornaments, combs, mirrors, etc. Small mortars of gun-powder are fired and the deafening noise momentarily drowns the hum of the crowd. Groups of young men go about cracking jokes and ogling at the young women who remain in quiet groups supervised by their elderly relations. The joy of the people interests the sociologist, but of more profound interest to him is the manner in which the crowd is distributed. Within the low walls less than two feet in height, surrounding the temple are a cleaner; and more orderly, though smaller, crowd consisting of Brahmans and Nayars. Of these only the Brahmans actually go into the central part of the temple, the Nayars being allowed to be only in the peripheral parts. The priest is assisted by a servant of the Nambisan caste, a caste intermediate between the Brahmans and Nayars ; the

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* *See* A. Aiyappan, "Nayadis of Malabar," *Madras Museum Bulletin*, vol. II, No. 4. Madras (1937).

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musicians are of the Marar caste similarly above the Nayars in status ; the keepers of the elephants, the men and women who do the harder work within the enclosure, but outside the temple are Nayars, but the cooks are Brahmans. These castes nearest to the temple can, for the sake of convenience, be termed group A castes (or as high castes, translating the Malayalam expression).

The larger crowd outside the enclosure remain quite clear of the wall. It consists of Iravas, artisans, Mukkuvas, and Kanakkas When some one from this group comes very near the walls, some member or other of the group A castes warns him away. This group we shall designate group B. Members of this group, as we already know, pollute each other only by actual contact, and not from a distance as they all do members of group A.

Further away from the temple and away from both the groups A and B, are a crowd darker and less clean-looking people. They are mostly Vettuvas, serfs (plate i, fig. 4 shows how they stand in a group away from the Iravas). The contrast between the two groups is vivid, the former, scantily clad, and darker, the latter more clothed, cleaner and generally lighter in skin colour. This last group, which we may designate C, is not all of one caste, but made of several castes that pollute each other from short distances or on contact.

This roughly tripartite division is discernible in almost any general assemblage whether it be games, or festivals at the village temples. This temporary association of members of a hierarchy is not fortuitous, but is a resultant of the difference in the degrees of pollution carried by each of them. The division we saw takes place along the lines of least social intercourse.

There are, according to old people, many ways of telling a member of one caste from that of another. Linguistic peculiarities of some castes have already been referred to. A Namputiri Brahman has his peculiar mannerisms, typical expressions, and even gesticulations, varying, of course, in the different localities. There is difference in the linguistic mannerisms of the Nayars and Iravas, which they recognise very readily. Generally the Nayar way of pronunciation is the standard for all the other people. In the matter of dress and ornaments there are similar significant differences between the Nayars and the Iravas. The women of the former caste usually have two loin clothes, one tightly tucked in between the legs, and the other over the first hanging down to the heels. Irava women had either the first or the second, but now they are copying the Nayar mode. The men's dress shows little difference. The difference extended even to cooking, the manner of eating and of bathing , to relationship terms and the method of addressing fellow caste men.

Each caste is commonly, but of course incorrectly, said to have its psychological characteristics. The Namputiri is foolish and witty ; the Nayar, vain, spiteful and lazy ; the Irava,

hard working, but fond of show[1] ; the Kaniyan, foolish ; and so forth. Most castes have generic terms of contempt applied to them by their neighbours, *e.g.*, an Irava is contemptuously referred to as a " *kotti* " or " beater " , the reference here being to the profession of toddy-making, in the course of which the inflorescence of the palms is beaten and pressed. These terms of contempt are always a fruitful source of quarrels.

CASTE IN THE MELTING POT.

The village with its conservatism does not show the effects of the changes that have taken place in its culture in as marked a manner as do the towns or such public places as the schools and the courts that have come up since the establishment of the new Government by Great Britain. In a court, all castes of people, who have anything to do there, literally rub shoulders. The judge may be a Tamil Brahman or a Nayar or an Irava ; the subordinate officials of the court may be similarly of different castes ; so also the members of the bar. The Brahman advocate addresses the Irava judge as " your Honour ", and the judge in his turn addresses the advocate as Mr. So-and-so. English etiquette has here replaced the native caste-linked manners. In most cases the foodtabus are some what relaxed by the " educated men " who constitute the temporary community in these modern institutions. Litigants from villages, not accustomed to the new modes of behaviour, sometimes behave in the old manner, uncovering the upper half of their body, covering the mouth with the palm while speaking and using the " demeaning " terms, such as " slave " for " I ". Some advocates of the group A castes, who have not left behind their caste notions, may address a witness of a lower caste, using the second person singular instead of the plural and " *eṭa* "[2]. An Irava judge told me that in his court he used to pull up the advocates when such terms smacking of caste were introduced in the course of examinations.

Among the educated people there is a careful avoidance of old terms of address, *e.g.* an Irava addresses a Nayar friend or colleague as another Nayar would do, sometimes prefixing " Mr. " to the name ; the Nayar does not expect, and the Irava does not want, that such titles as " *Tampuran* ", " *Kaimal*[3] ", " *Mūttār* " or " *Kaikkōr*[3] " should be used. They wish each other " good morning ", shake hands, and sometimes eat together in public places. But some coffee-houses and hotels observe caste regulations to the extent of excluding members of lower castes. Such sign boards as " Brahmin Hotel ", " Nayar Hotel " " Irava Hotel " and " Christian Hotel " are extremely common. Only in such big towns as Calicut, are there any hotels which can be regarded cosmopolitan. In intermediate types of hotels midway between the cosmopolitan and the extremely exclusive ones, members of

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[1] " An Irava having four pies (copper coins) would tie them each in a corner of his loin cloth." This is a common saying regarding the Irava's fondness for show. It will be enough if he ties the four in one corner as is the custom.

[2] A vocative like the English sirrah.

[3] This and similar words which were once official titles have become caste and sub-caste names to which now every one is entitled by reason of birth alone.

inferior castes are given food at a distance, *e.g.*, on the verandah, and are asked to remove the leaves after they have eaten from them. So most people prefer their own caste hotels. The mixed crowd in the court compound separate into caste groups in the eating places outside the court gate. Old fashioned men, on returning from the court or other public places bathe to purify themselves before re-entering their homes.

The caste situation in modern schools, which are centres of Western influence, is somewhat similar to that of the courts. The teachers are of various castes, as are also the students. Every teacher, irrespective of his caste, is called " Master ", or " Sar " (in Travancore). The students discuss the problems of caste and " untouchability " in vehement terms and try to understand each other's point of view. College and school hostels are sometimes run on caste lines, *e.g.*, the Maharajah's College in Cochin State has an Irava hostel and a hostel for Nayars and other high (group A) castes. The British Malabar District where missionary influence in education was greater has more cosmopolitan hostels. In contrast to the colleges run by missionaries, in the only College in Malabar District managed by the Hindus, Irava students were not admitted, even as day-scholars. Exclusive colleges and hostels are, however, growing less in tune with the growing democratic spirit. Outside the colleges and schools and in institutions connected with them, the students are again caught up in the old rhythm of caste-ridden life. But these educated men have new ideas which are the foundations on which new cultural norms are built.

The towns are as full of interest to the student of caste, as are the villages. In fact Malabar towns are clusters of villages with a few bazaars. Except where Christians or Mohammedans live, we do not see the rows of houses that form the streets of typical towns. Each house stands on its own ground or compound, and is separated from others by high stone walls or fencing. But the houses in towns are nearer one another than in villages, are better built and decorated. Each of the imporant castes is concentrated in a particular area of the town, *e.g.*, in Calicut, Chalapuram division is mainly populated by group A castes, and Pudiyara by Iravas; in Trichur, Punkunnam by Nayars, and Kurkancheri by Iravas. In all the bigger towns this concentration of castes in the different parts of the municipal area can be seen. Friendship springs up more easily between members of the same caste, and this leads to living and clubbing together. In towns there are naturally more educational and public institutions, and members of the different castes are brought into closer contact in schools, playgrounds, public offices, places of entertainment and recreation, reading rooms public meetings, professional and social clubs, municipal councils etc. The presence of large numbers of men and women of each caste is used for the formation of communal associations, based on caste, *e.g.*, the Iravas of Calicut and Cannanore have their *yogams* (associations) for their political and social advancement. They have their own temples built and managed by them exclusively. For marriages, and other festivities only the men of their own caste are invited, but sometimes, important men invite a few friends of other

castes also, who are not commensal and so have to be fed specially and separately. In the urban areas where institutions which are the products of European contact exert a greater influence, caste frontiers are frequently assailed, though the caste patterns run through the web of the people's lives, much in the same manner as in the rural areas. The cultural transition from the backward rural areas to the town is continuous, smooth, and without break.

The Irava worker going from the village to a town gets accustomed to better ways of living and freer intercourse with members of other castes, and brings back to the village not only the money, fineries, fashions and idioms of the town, but also new notions on caste. He has less of the old compunction to eat food cooked by inferior castes, he is not particular about the observance of untouchability. The Nayar, with urban experiences, returns to his village with his mental horizon similarly widened, his orthodoxy whittled down. Men who have seen " four men and four quarters " (*i.e.*, have travelled) are the first people who openly break caste laws by not bathing after they have been polluted by lower castes or eat food cooked by the latter. This last takes place in the toddy shop and in the village tavern, usually licensed by Iravas. Snacks cooked by the shopkeeper's wife are sold to the customers of all castes, though Nayars are prohibited by caste custom from eating them. But the very large number of Nayars who subvert the rule every evening say that there is no " untouchability " in the toddy shop. The lifting of the tabu is extending to other articles of food, beginning with tea, coffee[1], sweets, and last of all in highly educated circles to the staple food, rice, also.

The prohibition of intermarriage between members of different castes[2] is so well known that I need not dwell on it. Even this rule is breaking down, as some intercaste marriages have taken place recently, *e.g.*, one between a Nayar and Irava both school Teachers, another between a Brahman professor of English and an Irava women graduate, a third between an Irava judge and a Nayar woman of an aristocratic family. Efforts made in the direction of intercaste marriages and inter-dining will be further discussed below (pp).

Hitherto, we have been dealing with the rather unorganized slow changes taking place in the attitude towards caste. There were, however, leaders of a minority public opinion belonging to the upper as well as the lower castes who wanted to hasten the rate of change. I shall give here a concrete illustration of what was actually done about twenty years ago in Calicut.

Mr. Manjeri Rama Aiyer, a Tamil Brahman advocate, Dr. Choyi, an Irava medical practitioner, and Mr. C. Krishnan, an Irava lawyer and banker, all of them men of position and influence, were anxious that a particular road in the Nayar quarters of their town, Calicut, along which members of the B and C group castes were denied the right of passage (because

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[1] Tea and coffee are recently introduced luxuries.

[2] The exception to this rule is the hypergamy between members of the group A castes.

it passed near the temple tank, which, like the tank No. I in text figure 2, was for the exclusive use of group A castes), should be thrown open as a public thoroughfare. This road was being maintained at public expense, and it was, therefore, argued that everyone had the right of going along it. But no member of the group B or C castes had tried to use it in contravention of the customary prohibition. The two Irava gentlemen mentioned above, accompanied by their Brahman friend (who was a theosophist and an enthusiastic follower of Mrs. Annie Besant) walked along the prohibited road. If lesser men had done so, the residents would have protested and met the intrusion with physical violence, but the eminence of the two Irava gentlemen saved them from that humiliation. Criminal proceedings were instituted against the three, but the group A castes lost their case. The account of organised social reform on similar lines will be dealt with below (pp).

CASTE AND PROFESSION.

I propose to deal with the theoretical problems of caste, only in so far as they relate to conditions in Malabar[1]. Local history and circumstances have given caste different trends in different places. Though the Tamil and Malayalam-speaking areas of Southern India are so near each other, their caste organisation is different. The origins of caste system are certainly of interest, but the actual working of the system is of still greater importance in sociological theory. The foregoing description of caste in different situations has shown the existence as the lowest among the Hindus of a class of people who were (and are, though not legally, as slavery has been abolished by the British) slaves ; then a group of free workers and farmers, artisans and craftsmen ; and an aristocracy of Brahmans, Nayars, etc. How and when the slaves become slaves, we are not in a position to say. The next problem is how did the great rift appear between the free sections of the people of Malabar, our groups A and B. Anticipating the conclusions of the following paragraphs, the answer to this question may be put thus :—On a community of comparatively barbarous people among whom society was differentiated horizontally according to differences in the manner of earning livelihood[2] which was the pattern for early South Indian social differentiation, the superimposition of a conquering[3] people, the Namputiris, with an Aryan culture, brought about a vertical hierarchical division, in which the professional lines came to be somewhat blurred.

Many kinds of evidences can be brought in support of the above generalisation. Several Nayar and Irava families regard each other as having been kin and meet for the

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[1] I was so much interested in the problem of caste that I wanted to extend my investigation into the hill tribes of Malabar, especially in Wynad, where social differentiation seems to follow different lines. Through lack of time, I had to drop the idea for the time being.

[2] Profession determined caste, but when caste became a petrified system caste determined the profession of individuals born into each caste group. Among the Namputiri Brahmans there are sixteen sub-castes, the lowest of which is denied the right of studying the Vedas.

[3] The conquest was mainly cultural. Only legendary information is available of this infiltration.

purpose of some simple rituals at the time of death in each other's family. In the northernmost part of North Malabar, a region which the diffusionist will regard as an interesting peripheral area, Iravas and Nayars used to meet in marriage parties of the latter, and eat under the same roof, a practice which is now being given up. There is tradition to show some of the chiefs of North Malabar, who are now passing for Kshatriyas were descended from Iravas. Another legend explains that the twelve main castes were the offspring of a Brahman and his Paraya (serf caste) wife, and that the twelve separated and took up different professions, but met once a year to celebrate the anniversary of their father's death each performing the rites in his own peculiar manner ; the twelve sons were, according to the legend, equally divine and powerful.

Reference was made above to the Vannan (washerman, group B) supplying the purifying cloth, *māṟṟu*, to menstruating women. This service, the women of the Vannan caste performs not only for the Irava and Kammala women, but also for the higher castes including the Brahmans (Namputiris). They also wash the clothes with which to dress the idols of gods and goddesses in some of the Brahman temples. Before any purificatory bath after ritual pollution, the *māṟṟu* has to be worn. I should be remembered that the ordinary, non-ceremonial washing for these high castes is done by the Nayar washerman, Veluttedan. How is it that the Vannan, who pollutes them from a distance, and is professionally attached to the lower group of castes, happens to be the only washerman who can make things ritually pure ? The answer is, that his was the original and only caste of washermen, before the Namputiris came and created the upper caste washerman from an Aryanised group.

The artisans, again, who are untouchable, were and are now, the only artisans, and they build the temples and houses of the high castes, who purify the buildings before using them. The examination of the professional divisions among the Aryanised castes (group A), into the details of which we cannot go here, shows that those professional activities which were of especial interest to the Brahmans were reduplicated among their immediate followings mostly for religious reasons. In conclusion, it may be said that the cultural conquest of Malabar by the Brahmans, caused confusion in the professional castes of Malabar, but even within the Aryanised, the ruling principle of social differentiation was *work*. This is more or less true of the sub-sects of the Namputiris themselves.

A relevant question to be discussed in this context is : why should certain kinds of economic, artistic, or religious activities be valued high, and others low ? Culture change gives a clue to this rather intriguing problem. The Irava leader (of whom a full account will be given in chapter VII) worked vigorously among his followers to induce them to give up the profession of toddy-making, as it was regarded as having been responsible for the low rank of the Iravas in caste gradation. I had an argument with an intelligent old Irava on this question. I pointed out that toddy-making supported the families of several thousands of Iravas, and from the economic point of view, it would be nothing short of idiocy to stop it.

He shook his head and told me, " Our Guru (teacher) has said that it is a sin to make and sell liquor. Our caste can rise up only if no one among us is a toddy tapper ". It is not in the history of the Iravas only, but also of several other Malabar castes, who wanted to rise socially, that giving up their ancestral professions, and changing caste names and adopting new ones, have been suggested as practical methods. The standards of valuation of hereditary avocations depended on the circumstances peculiar to the age when such valuations were made, such as the greater importance of toddy makers compared to artisans, of artisans compared to fishermen and so forth. More historical data and extended analysis than are possible here will be required to get at the concepts of social differentiation on which caste is based. What I have given here are a few suggestions warranted by the limited scope of my present study.

Of great significance to the study of Malabar culture is the practice of " untouchability " which is the most obvious, and at the same time the most pernicious aspect of the caste system. The following section, lengthy though it is, is fully justified, as the first sociological analysis ever made of untouchability.

UNTOUCHABILITY.

Untouchability means much more than the word actually conveys. ' Untouchable ' is the English translation of the vernacular expression for ' one who carries pollution or impurity '. Untouchability in Anglo-Indian parlance is the socio-religious practice by which the Hindus keep large numbers of the lower castes from touching or coming near their persons, houses, temples, tanks and sometimes even public roads. As a social injustice against a very large number of depressed classes in Hindu India, it has made Indians ashamed of ' untouchability ' in their midst, and led to its removal being made one of the principal planks of the political platform of the Indian National Congress. Untouchability imposes great humiliation on about 80 million Indians, and therefore, quite naturally, it is the rift between the high and the low castes that has attracted the attention of outsiders. But the practice of untouchability is woven so subtly into the fabric of Hindu society in several degrees and manner in the different grades that it is only by long residence in the country in close touch with the people that an understanding of it is possible.

Untouchability is common to all parts of India and has affected Christians and Mohammedans to a certain extent. Since the object of this section is to understand the nature of untouchability and not the problems of its distribution, I propose to confine attention only to Malabar where the people have considerable notoriety for developing ideas of untouchability to its maximum intensity. The great Hindu Sanyasin, Swami Vivekananda, was so painfully impressed by the peculiarity and tyranny of the practice of untouchability in Malabar that he called it a veritable " lunatic asylum "!

The word "untouchability" itself is extremely misleading. The expression 'contact tabu' is to be preferred to it, as it helps us to avoid such popular cacophony as 'unapproachability' and 'distance pollution'. Contact tabu is the sanctioned usage by which persons by reason of their birth or physiological or ritual state, and men, animals and inanimate objects by reason of their real or supposed uncleanliness, act as carriers of pollution and induce temporarily a similar state in others by their contact either direct or within a prescribed distance, which impurity has to be removed by ritual means to restore those polluted to their original condition. Under this definition a polluting class of people cannot exist and they do not in fact, since any individual of any caste may under certain circumstances and at certain times be polluting or non-polluting. The so-called 'untouchables' represent only the apex of the system.

Very little is known of the history of the practice of untouchability. In the *Keralolpatti*, a Brahminical work on the traditional history of Malabar, it is said that "in the beginning there was only the tabu against touch and that it was much later that the lower castes were interdicted against approaching members of the higher castes". The Hill Tribes observe contact tabus during ritual or physical states of impurity, *e.g.*, during periods of mourning, menstruation, etc. The nearest parallel to the Indian contact tabu is the personal tabu of the New Zealand Maors. It is the pathological extension of the Hindu idea of personal purity, and is implemented by a series of religious and social sanctions.

Contact tabu between caste groups.—We have seen that numerically or otherwise the most significant castes are (1) Namputiris (Brahmans), (2) Nayars, (3) Iravas and (4) Cherumas. Being mostly rich landholders and at the same the 'gods on earth', the Namputiris occupy a place in Malabar Society for which there are few parallels in the modern world. A Namputiri's person is sacred, his economic power is equalled only by his religious influence, and to maintain this unique status, he leads a life that is ostensibly in conformity with the ideals of Brahminical scriptures, eating the purest food of vegetables and very little of animal food which includes only such good things as milk, honey, etc., keeping his body pure by several plunge baths in cold water of tanks, and wearing the cleanest clothes. He has his own exclusive rituals which should not be even seen by members of the lower castes, including the Nayars. He is the priest in the Hindu temples of the land and worshipping the deity inside the sanctum and receiving the offered materials directly from the hands of the priest are privileges reserved for his class. A Namputiri Brahman is polluted by the touch or proximity of a Nayar within seven feet of his person. In ordinary practice, however, the Nayar is allowed to go quite near and he is considered polluting only by touch, as the Namputiri requires the services of the former. Uncooked food material for the use of the Namputiri can be touched by the Nayar without its being made unfit for consumption, but all cooked food is differently treated, because it is polluted by the

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[1] *See* Raymond Firth, *Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori*, p. 236, ff.

Nayar's touch. A Nayar has, therefore, no access to the kitchen, the eating place, and all sacred spots in a Namputiri house. Even drinking water touched by a Nayar is not to be drunk by the Namputiri.

The peculiar marriage regulations of the Namputiris which allow only the eldest male of the family to marry a Namputiri woman and oblige others to enter into morganatic relationships with Nayar women establish a social bridge between the two groups which has tended to make the barriers separating them quite thin. Strict letter of the law, however, requires that a Namputiri should not eat or drink anything in the house of his Nayar consort; not only that, his " wife " and children pollute him by their touch and before re-entering his house or touching a member of his caste, he has to purify himself ceremonially.

The Namputiri is polluted even from a distance by castes below the Nayars. When a Namputiri or Nayar goes out and when he sees a member of the castes lower to him, he utters a loud warning sound 'ho' at which the man of the lower caste moves away from the track to make way for the exalted person. When a Namputiri woman goes out she is accompanied by her Nayar maid who keeps continuously crying out '*Yahe*' to warn low caste men to remain beyond the polluting point from the august lady. On those days when the Namputiri has to be free from the slighest pollution, even the sight of a very low caste person, like the Nayadi, is regarded as bad. The Namputiri seldom comes into contact with members of castes below the Nayars.

Wherever the influence of the Namputiris is great there the Nayars are dependent on them as tenants, workers, or domestic servants. The richer of the Nayars deem it a privilege to have Namputiri consorts for their women, and those of them that have very close association with the Namputiris observe many of the food tabus of the latter. The Nayars are polluted by the lower castes from a lesser distance than the Namputiri. Unlike the Namputiris, the Nayars have to come into close contact with the lower castes in the course of their economic transactions which they do on behalf of the Namputiris and also for themselves.

The Iravas who are numerically the largest community on the Malabar coast are at the top of the caste group known as "*tīndal jāti*," *i.e.*, castes that pollute from a distance. A member of this caste pollutes a Namputiri from a distance of thirty-two feet; he has no access to the houses of Nayars or Namputiris, their temples, tanks, and wells, and has no freedom to use roads or foot-paths when Nayars and Namputiris are near by. Some items of raw food such as oil, milk, etc., touched by the Iravas become impure and cannot be used by the Namputiris. But the Namputiris and the Nayars require their services in innumerable ways and things touched by the Irava are sprinkled with water to make them pure.

The Iravas keep other members of the *tindal* group, such as the Cherumas, away from them for the same reasons as make the Nayars to observe the contact tabu against them

(the Iravas). When he goes about, a Cheruma has to make a sound resembling '*Iyeh*' so that his superior castes might not be taken by surprise. As soon as he hears the Cheruma's warning sound, the Nayar or the Irava, if he is in an unpolluted condition, asks the Cheruma to move away from the path. If he is already polluted or he is going to bathe he tells him "I am 'impure,'" or "I am going to bathe, you need not move away." The Cheruma, in his turn, treats the Nayadis as 'unapproachable.'

Contact tabus for ceremonial purposes.—Members of the same caste or even the same family observe contact tabu for definite ceremonial purposes. A man observing fasts becomes pure by the observance of several tabus and in order to maintain the pure state avoids contact with his friends and relatives. Pilgrims preparing to visit the great temple at Palni or Cranganore observe contact and dietetic tabus for considerably long periods, when they live in separate sheds by themselves without touching anyone, and cooking their food in special vessels, and eating separately. Touching any dirty thing, *e.g.*, a rag or potsherd pollutes them and necessitates purification. Impure food, *e.g.*, fish and meat are carefully avoided on these special occasions. Those who are under death pollution convey their 'impurity' to others ; so they keep themselves away from other houses, temples and temple tanks.

For ensuring the utmost physical purity on such occasions as worship in a temple or taking a solemn oath in the presence of the image of the deity, the man or woman bathes and does not change the wet clothes.

Physiological pollution.—Women in menses and in child-bed, dead-bodies, men and women after sexual intercourse—all these are carriers of pollution. Women in their monthly periods pollute everything that they touch and that touches them. They are, therefore, asked to keep away from the kitchen lest the food is polluted ; from the shrines or the room in which rituals are conducted lest their sanctity is lost ; from their husbands lest they lose their virility ; from fruit trees lest they be blighted. They are sequestered for at least three days. Menstruating women convey atmospheric defilement within a radius of 12 feet from them. When somebody is ill and an astrologer is consulted, very often the cause of the disease turns out to be the anger of some spiritual being whose shrine has been polluted by a menstruating woman's approach. If a tree that used to be very productive suddenly ceases to be so, again the blame is laid at the door of a woman. Women in child-bed are secluded for periods ranging from fifteen days to three months. Men and women who have to touch them then have to undergo ritual purification. Everything, clothes, mats, etc., which they use carry pollution and are burnt down with their bathing sheds. The lowest castes have a kind of horror for menstrual and child-birth pollution and observe the tabus more rigorously and for longer periods, women being housed for long periods in special menstrual huts far away from the dwelling houses.

In the case of the dead-body, any one who touches it or enters the house where it lies is polluted. Sexual intercourse makes people ritually impure till a plunge bath is taken. Anything touched by the mouth or on which saliva has fallen becomes impure. For this reason, the European method of turning over the pages of a book with the tip of the finger moistened with saliva is repugnant to most Hindus.

Extension of the contact tabu to material objects and public places.—Not only persons but inanimate things are also subject to pollution. The instance of water and cooked food is well known. Houses, earthenware vessels, and clothing[1] are also polluted by the contact of lower castes. Even the roads round temples are not to be used by Iravas and other lower castes, lest the temple be polluted. Tanks and wells are similarly kept for the exclusive use of individuals of the same caste group. If an Irava and a Nayar touch two different branches of a tree at the same time, pollution is conducted from the former to the latter as if it were some form of energy like electricity travelling through a conductor. Village schoolmasters, punishing students of the lower castes with a cane or a twig do it with lightning speed and as soon as the farther end of the rod has come in contact with the palm or thigh of the student, they drop the nearer end so that "pollution" does not get the time to flow from the student to the teacher. The water of small puddles and tanks conducts pollution just as solids do. The Iravas and the Vettuvas (serfs) of village M— do not have separate tanks for bathing, as they have in other places, but use the same tank, getting over the technical difficulty in an ingenious manner. If two individuals, and Irava and a Vettuva are bathing at the same time, before he comes out of the water, the former asks the other to get out first to leave the water "pure" for him during the last few seconds of his ablutions. As long as the Vettuva remains in the water, his contact makes it "impure" by conduction, but the moment he leaves it, it becomes "pure."

While the water touched by an Irava becomes impure for the Nayar, the toddy manufactured and sold by the former can be drunk by the latter without becoming polluted. Here it is a question of necessity knowing no law. Oil touched by an Irava can be purified by the touch of a Christian for the use of a Nayar. But on the other hand, cooked food touched by any lower caste should not be eaten as there is no way of purifying it.

Articles made of metals, wood, stone, etc., are as a rule non-conductors of pollution, but earthenware vessels convey pollution.

Europeans also are "untouchables" in a way. Captain Alexander Hamilton, an English trader, once visited a relative of the Zamorin, who with his wife received him well and feasted him with toddy, etc. Unfortunately Hamilton's hat touched the thatch of the house which was thereby polluted. Immediately after Hamilton's return the thatch was

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[1] Clothing also has to be dipped in water to purify it. A new cloth is not affected by pollution; anyone can handle it, but once it is washed, it acquires the status of its wearer. If new clothes were also conductors of pollution trade would not be possible.

pulled down and burnt and replaced by fresh thatch. He gives another interesting account of the visit of the chief of Badagara to his ship. " I carried him," he writes " to the great cabin and would have treated him with coffee, tea and wine, or spirits, but he would taste none, telling me that my water was polluted by our touch, but he thanked me." [1] Orthodox Hindus have even now scruples against touching Europeans or eating anything touched by them. Simple physical contact as during the act of shaking hands pollutes the upper castes.

Methods of removing pollution.—The common method of removing "pollution" is by plunge bath in a tank of water, as if it were something soluble in water. The clothing which the person had on should also be dipped in water. But there are various grades in the intensity of pollution. The greater the social gulf between two castes the more intense the pollution between them. Nayadis who are the lowest of Hindu castes on the Malabar Coast convey the greatest pollution. Orthodox people say that to remove the pollution caused by a Nayadi, the Nayar or Namputiri must bathe in seven streams and seven tanks after fasting for a day and then cut his finger and let out a few drops of blood. Even very low castes have fantastic notions of purity and pollution, *e.g.*, I saw a very old Ulladan (a caste very much like Nayadis) with dozens of scars on his ring finger, each of which represented a purificatory blood-letting. The Ulladans and Parayas are mutually polluting.

Menstrual pollution is removed by women in the manner described on p. . The newly washed cloth is worn before the purificatory bath. Any male touching a menstruating woman or woman in child-bed has to drink *panchagavya, i.e.*, a mixture of five materials obtained from the cow[2]. Birth-pollution is removed in the same way as menstrual pollution. Wherever the new mother goes, a woman follows her sprinkling cowdung in water to purify the spots trod on by her. On the completion of the prescribed period of pollution, the Vannan woman cleans the lying-in room and smears the floor with cowdung, and burns the mats and the temporary bath-room made of thatching. For all Hindus cowdung mixture is a universal purifier, believed to have disinfecting properties. Anyway, it is not such a disgusting substance as many Europeans seem to regard it.

For the removal of death pollution, the Vannan woman cleans the house and smears the floors with cowdung, breaks all the earthenware vessels, and the barber sprinkles cowdung mixture, on the mourners. In Central Malabar, some water is obtained from the nearest temple, which is sprinkled on the house, the mourners and also dropped into their tanks and wells. In North Malabar the milk of the tender coconut is dropped on the toes of the mourners as they return after the purificatory bath. The tabu against certain articles of diet is also ceremonially broken by the mourners eating bits of coconut jaggery.

For removing pollution some orthodox people touch rice and gold. To remove defilement from a spot within the temple precincts where some animal died, the process

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[1] Logan, *op cit*, p. 301.

[2] Milk, ghee, sour milk, urine and dung.

consists of (1) digging up and removing the soil to a depth of seven feet; (2) making a fire over the pit, and then filling up with fresh earth; (3) tethering a cow there for a day; (4) feeding Brahmans on the spot; and (5) sprinkling *panchagavya.* To purify a polluted tank or well, the whole of the water in it has to be emptied and then sub-soil water allowed to fill it.

Sanctions for untouchability.—The meaningless usages connected with untouchability had both social and religious sanctions. A Nayar in feudal Kerala, it is said, could hack down or send his lance through an Irava or Cheruma who polluted him. Even now in rural places it is not uncommon for a low caste man to be beaten by a man of the superior caste for approaching him within polluting distance. Altercations too very often occur when a Nayar feels that the other has not moved sufficiently away for him to pass on unpolluted. Refusal to make way for a man of a higher caste is a crime against society. The time-honoured belief is that a person not observing pollution properly becomes blind. A man or woman polluting a shrine brings ruin on his or her family. Not to observe food and contact tabus lowers the status of a man. Women observe the tabus much more stringently than men. " If you eat anything cooked by one of an inferior caste, you will be shortening your life." This is the usual advice given to youths on gastric matters by old men. Untouchability thus goes to the very root of the Hindu social system. During the early centuries of the Christian era, very severe social sanctions were prescribed for contact tabus, the Buddhist Jatakas (Birth stories) recording some interesting illustrations: a certain princess, it is narrated, washed her eyes thrice with water to remove the pollution engendered by her seeing a Chandala (lowest of the low) in the morning!

Contact tabus and culture change.—While contact tabus are insisted upon and observed with vigour in most rural areas, they are disappearing very fast in urban and urbanised areas due to a series of slow innovations in the political, educational, legal and economic spheres of the cultural life of the people. Organised movements to remove the disabilities of the " untouchables " and aiming to speed up the process of change (see Chapter IX), are very recent, and are better known, unlike other almost imperceptible and subtle forces working in the same direction. Mr. Yeatts, Census Superintendent for Madras (1931) summarises the present day situation in the following words :—

> " This remarkable development of the superiority theory (pollution by mere approach) was practically confined to the west coast and of late years has greatly weakened even there, probably more because of the development of communications and increase of population than from any conscious realisation that there is in such a system something hardly compatible with claims to culture and advancement. It is probably becoming evident that a person of such rare texture that a presence sixty feet away pollutes him had better seek out some desert island or

> develope a less fragile purity. The railway began the break down of this preposterous system ; the 'bus may complete it.' Contact pollution on the other hand existed and exists all over the presidency." (Madras Census Report, 1931.)

It is not merely the growth of population and communications, that have weakened the incidence of unapproachability, but several other factors also have been responsible for it. The first favourable circumstance, undoubtedly, was the presence of the English with their new norms in which personal purity of this strange Malabar variety had no place. The white administrators gave the British Districts the proper atmosphere for change whereas in the Native States only indirectly under British influence change was slow, because the Rajas themselves observed the tabus and set the example for orthodoxy. In Cochin and Travancore, only persons belonging to group A castes had admission into the quarters occupied by the rulers and their following.[1] The officials of the two states were also stricklers to the custom and followed the royal example in maintaining it, but on the other hand, the civil servants under the English were expected to observe no distinction of caste in administrative matters. But as the native states usually tried to come up to English ideals for the sake of political prestige, they did not vigorously oppose changes but conformed slowly to the practices of British Malabar. Into the courts and other public institutions in British Malabar, from the very beginning of their establishment ; all castes were admitted and no consideration was given to caste. Iravas and other lower caste people were appointed in all ranks of the Government services open to Indians, but it took long for the native states to do so. But for the example set by the British, changes in caste practices would have been extremely slow.

The new educational system can be regarded as having contributed greatly to the reduction of "unapproachability." In the schools established by the British, the children as well as the teachers belonged to all kinds of castes and these had to rub shoulders in the class room and play-ground. It was thus impossible to maintain caste in schools. The native states who copied the British model of schools, got over the difficulty during the earlier years by refusing admission to Irava children[2]. The school children returned home in the evenings completely polluted not only by nearness to but also by physical contact with the children of inferior castes. Caste rules prescribe that they should eat any food only after purification by bathing and also dipping their loin-cloths and shirts in water. The children of the more orthodox parents were forced to go without any midday meal, but others discarded the rules and used to take light refreshments. Many further relaxations in the rules continued to be made in favour of school children : (1) they were not required to dip their clothes every day, but merely to sprinkle water on them and to keep them in a separate room that came to be known as the "school room" ; (2) later the purificatory bath on returning from school was also declared unnecessary ; (3) school children could take light

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[1] This is strictly true now of Cochin State only. For details *see* Chapter IX.

[2] They had to struggle long to get admission to schools (Chapter IX).

refreshments prepared by men of inferior castes. Adults also, who had to move closely with members of other caste-groups in the transaction of business in the bazars, in the courts, and public offices, etc., began to take advantage of the benefits of the changes which were enjoyed at the outset only by the school-going population. Only the women remained " orthodox " right up to recent times.

Education in the new schools led to freer intercourse between the younger generations of the various castes than was possible in pre-British days, and this led to the bridging of the social gap to some extent. In fact, it can be said, that new standardized norms came to be developed for the educated sections of the various communities, some with and others without the consent of the older generations. Propriety of many old customs began to be questioned, the first of them being " pollution through the air." In schools developed the sense of equality between man and man irrespective of caste, and dissatisfaction and revolt against the inequities of caste. British law recognized this democratic principle in theory, though it could not be established in practice, since it had to be done after a process of education. The public thoroughfares could, according to law, be used by all, and none need move away from it in order to prevent persons being polluted, but custom demanded that it should be done, and being stronger than law, custom prevailed over the provisions of law. It devolved upon those who rebelled against custom to assert their right, by refusing to inconvenience themselves in order to save social superiors from being polluted, which resulted invariably in minor fracas. A typical illustration may be given here.

An Irava boy belonging to the village M. . . was going to school one morning (1934). A Nayar going in the direction of the temple said to the boy " I am 'pure' (*śuddha*); make way for me." The boy who had imbibed the new rebellious spirit replied, " I am in a hurry, I cannot make way for you. If you don't want to be polluted by me, you can yourself get away from the foot path and allow me to go straight." and he proceeded on. This irritated the old Nayar, who slapped the boy on his face and pushed him. As it was late for him he did not return home, but told the Headmaster of the incident and sent word to his elder brother, who with his friends wreaked vengeance on the Nayar for his cowardly attack on the boy. The village was divided into two camps, one on the Nayar's side, and the other on the Irava's. After a period of estrangement, peace was restored through the good offices of the local magistrate. Similar sporadic assaults on Irava school boys were very common and continue now here and there in rural areas.

In the biography of an Irava leader, the late Mr. T. K. Madhavan, the situation towards the close of the last century in Travancore is thus described :

> " When going to the school of the Christian teacher (*Aśān*) a mile to the south of my home, I used to make way for Nayar men and women, and move more than the usual polluting distance from the road. The fear that the Nayars would beat me used always to haunt me. Some Nayars who were personally known to me used to

> be specially appreciative of my politeness and to remark, 'Look, how good-mannered this boy is! He comes of a good family. It is only such Iravas as are low-born that refuse to make way for us.' These observations were then pleasing to me. My companion on my daily trip to and from the school was a Nayar boy, Govindan by name, whose poor mother was a dependant of ours. He could go straight along all the roads, whereas, I, in spite of my being economically better off, had to leave the road every now and then. This used to cut me to the quick."[1] (Translation).

Mr. Madhavan has left on record his early impressions of the advantages derived from school education in the removal of caste prejudice. When a young student at the English school at Mavelikkara (Travancore) where with great difficulty Irava students got admission, Mr. Madhavan was "rusticated" by the Headmaster. Feeling sure that he would get justice on appealing to the Inspector of Schools who was a relative of the Maha Raja, the young student sought an interview with him at his residence, but being an Irava he had to remain several yards away from the house on the road leading to the gate and send word to the Inspector through some servant or passer-by of the Nayar or other higher caste who might be obliging enough to help him. He requested a Nayar, and then a Brahmin to inform the Inspector that he, an Irava, sought an interview, but whether or not they carried his message to the august person, he did not know. He waited on the road for about three hours, fidgetting and impatient. Then to his great joy, he saw the Inspector's younger brother, a class-mate of his, entering the house by another gate on the opposite side. To him Madhavan sent a Nayar boy to inform him that an Irava classmate of his was waiting outside on the road. As soon as he heard that the visitor was a classmate, the Inspector's brother came out hurriedly and expressed his sympathy with Madhavan for the trouble he had experienced. Going in, he brought the Inspector out to meet Madhavan. The ready response and sympathy evoked in the young nobleman was due to the simple fact that he and Madhavan were classmates. Madhavan learnt from this that caste prejudices are group habits, which individuals could easily get over by freer social intercource.

The legal equality of Iravas is not recognised now in Cochin (and until 1936 in Travancore), for, several roads, especially those in the vicinity of temples and palaces are closed to them and there are notices put up prominently, prohibiting "Iravas and other polluting castes" from using those thoroughfares. Public roads in the immediate neighbourhood of temples have roundabout diversions for the use of "polluting castes." When small religious processions of upper castes come along other public roads, the Iravas and other lower caste persons used to be driven away from the road by the Police. The Cochin legislative Council passed a resolution in November, 1935, requesting the Government to put a stop to this custom, but they did not accept the resolution, which led to country-wide protests. In the earlier days of English rule, education led automatically to service under

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[1] Life of T. K. Madhavan in Malayalam, pp. 10-11.

the Government. Any Government official, dressed in his delegated administrative authority, was (and is to great extent now) held in high esteem and paid great honours. When educated Iravas were appointed to responsible administrative posts first in British Malabar district, men of superior castes serving under them and also members of the public had to be respectful to and honour them, in spite of the lowness of the officer's caste. They were naturally not expected to behave as their non-official fellow caste-men in the presence of Nayars and Brahmans. The custom regarding the use of terms of respect was reversed, the Nayars and Brahmans using them, instead of the Irava. The old forms of behaviour thus became weakned and vestigial in practice. When once they were broken by the few officials of the Irava caste, the ball was set rolling and the older order was on the downward gradient. Some of the earlier Irava officers of Cochin and Travancore, and the less assertive ones in British Malabar, had to face opposition and prejudice. An Irava judicial officer in Cochin had Nayar menials in the court, who refused to pull the ***punkah*** (a large fan suspended from the ceiling) for him. Another, the first Irava to be appointed as a magistrate in Travancore, was insulted, it is said by his Police subordinates, who suspended the toddy-maker's apparatus in front of his house, to remind him of his caste-profession. This particular official ended his life by suicide, unable, according to current reports, to put up with the persecutions of Nayars and Brahmans.

Any Irava of some independent position, talks nowadays to members of superior castes without using the honorific titles, such as ***kaimal***, ***muttar***, or ***kaikkor*** for Nayars, and ***tampuran*** for Brahmans. With the growth of education, the minor differences between various castes in dress and fashions and ornaments, in language and pronunciation, and in the standard of personal cleanliness, by which anyone's caste could be told at once, are fast disappearing. In the absence of direct personal knowledge, only circumstantial evidence enables one to tell a cultured Irava from a cultured Nayar, or a Nayar from a cultured Namputiri. It is not uncommon nowadays to find in the same family, the parents conforming to old standards and the children behaving differently, *e.g.*, an old Irava woman may go about with breast uncovered and ear lobes enlarged, with only a simple loin-cloth round her waist (plate X) with old fashioned ornaments, and her hair crudely knotted at the top, whereas her young daughter has her body completely draped in a *sari*, and her ear lobes normal, wears simple and graceful ornaments, her hair done beautifully in a hind-knot, etc. Just as there are two standards within the same family, the whole caste has two sections—one that observes pollution, etc., the other that does not. Social castes in Malabar is slowly giving way to economic classes. With the growth of the money sense, whoever has money commands respect despite caste. Improvement in their economic status has meant also a corresponding rise in social status of the Iravas. The autonomy of caste is being broken except in the sphere of religion, but the temple entry proclamation in Travancore

(Chapter IX) has initiated an attack on it which will spread. Logan (*op. cit.* p. 120) wrote thus thirty years ago :

> " . . . . . although British freedom has made great inroads on the Hindu custom in this respect, chiefly through the influence of education and extended knowledge, it is too soon yet to look forward to the final extinction of this anomalous custom (untouchability)."

But to-day we are more optimistic. Untouchability will be a mere name in the course of a few decades.

As the belief in pollution by atmospheric or direct contact of human beings has been exploded by the growth of education in democracy, the irrational notions of ceremonial and physiological purity have been replaced by more exact and reasoned attitudes and ideas. The educated Irava women no longer believe in the purificatory property of the washerwoman's clothes in removing the imaginary pollution of menstrual blood. They do not sequester themselves or remain 'unclean.' During child-birth also the barber woman does not appear in the households of the educated Irava to purify the mother and child. Death pollution is observed, but the tabus have grown weak.

How inconvenient the observance of caste is under modern conditions, is somewhat roughly indicated above. Several writers on caste have shown that caste is incompatible with modern conditions of life. The very observance of caste is rendered impossible in modern institutions, where all castes have to mingle. Some writers have called caste "the most disastrous and blighting of human institutions." The human mind, I venture to say, is everywhere inclined to be taxonomic ; like individuals and groups tend to associate more or less permanently, forming rigid, hereditary castes, here, and somewhat loose classes, elsewhere. The Hindu has been more taxonomically disposed than others in this respect ; the slightest points of difference were made use of in proliferating and multiplying castes. It is easy to show that the numbers of castes have been steadily increasing by fission, by closer association between certain families leading to endogamous sub-castes within endogamous castes. Caste is like class in that members of each caste are more or less equal among themselves, have standard forms of speech, dress, and education, are similarly assertive or deferential in the presence of inferiors or superiors as the case may be, but caste differs from class in being a real endogamous group, with specific functions of a hereditary nature. Caste determined a man's profession, faith, mode of life, marriage, etc., reducing the individual's struggle for existence to a minimum. Caste-linked professions led to specialisation and easy acquirement of the necessary skill for one's life work. The result of it was, as Margaret Mead has shown, while the individual was reduced to a mere cog in a communal wheel, the whole cultural wealth at the command of the

community increased in volume[1]. The individual participated in but an infinitesimal sphere of the whole culture. His curiosity and ambition to pry into other spheres and fields than his own, were mercilessly crushed. Each caste group had more or less the function of policing the caste immediately below it[2]. The Nayar, *e.g.*, checked the Irava from being anything but an Irava in dress, manners, rituals or religious practices, etc. Similarly did the Namputiris constitute the social constabulary over the Nayars, punishing violators of custom and social 'climbers' with ridicule, or economic or social sanctions. A Namputiri father of a Nayar would not, on pain of being considered a traitor by his fellow caste-men, teach his son the sacred hymns or spells of the Vedas. This policing again, led to stability of culture, as a whole, and to the uniformity and solidarity also of the individual castes. An individual had a strong sense of loyalty to his local caste group, caste thus forming a nationality within the nation. The interests of the caste and of the wider community did not always coincide. In this manner caste remains a hindrance to political progress. In Malabar, if an Irava and a Nayar were to have a dispute heard, say by a Nayar magistrate, the Irava would feel suspicious that the Nayar judge might support his fellow Nayar. He would prefer a Brahman or a European judge. This state of affairs was to a certain extent, bound to lower the efficiency of the public services. Caste, thus, has much to be said for and against it.

Europeanism in Malabar cut across caste in many ways. By giving the same kind of education and equal laws for all, the British paved the way for equality; by appointing some men of lower castes to administrative posts, they broke the backbone of the caste system. The missionaries, especially of the Basel Mission, fused the different castes who became Christians into one uniform community, a fact which impressed the Hindus and made them ponder on the absurdities of caste exclusivism. The economic development of the country gave wider scope for the choice of professions. Caste is coming to be less and less linked with work, birth alone being its determinant. Caste was King, but no longer is it so now. No longer can the Namputiri prohibit a Nayar or an Irava studying the Vedas or performing marriage with the Brahmanical rites; no longer can a Nayar stop an Irava adopting Nayar manner of life, except in the most backward villages. "The times have changed now. Such things could not have happened some years ago" says the old orthodox strickler pathetically. The graded system of privileges, deferential attitudes and duties have become things of a passing culture. To be allowed to have a tiled roof or an upper storey for one's house, to wear a silk ***urumāl*** (scarf) on one's head, to deck oneself with gold ornaments, to suffix titles to one's name, were privileges which had to be paid for by those entitled to

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[1] Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament.* New York, 1935.

[2] But this did not prevent downward infiltration of culture, though in an extremely slow fashion. There was an urge to rise up, without transgressing established custom.

them by birth. About 250 years ago, only palaces and temples of high castes could be tiled; low caste temples, if made of stone, had to be covered with thatch. The English traders at Calicut had to wait long before they could get the King's permission to tile their factory. When the ancient system of local government was abrogated, the chiefs had only the remnants of tradition, but no legal authority to dispense and maintain these privileges, and now practically no law governs many of these privileges, especially those relating to the use of objects of material culture, *i.e.*, dress, ornaments, articles of domestic use, etc.[1]

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[1] In the year 1818 (Malayalam Era 993), Rani Parvati Bai of Travancore issued a royal proclamation "granting permission to the Sudras (Nayars), Iravas, Shanars, and Mukkuvas of her state to wear ornaments of gold and silver without paying *adiyara* (placed-at-the feet) money." Kerala Society papers, Vol. I, 4, p. 193.

CHAPTER III—SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE IRAVAS.

Geographical and other Divisions.

From the general account of caste in Chapter II there emerges the conclusion that the Iravas as a caste have their set role, in the body politic, maintaining the traditional functions, of not only their own group, but also of those below them, and that their caste is a microcosm that reflects all the characteristics of the Hindu macrocosm. This section will be devoted to a detailed description and analysis of the inter-relationship of the group B castes, the sub-castes of the Iravas, and how caste authority is canalised among them. of

In the northern matrilineal section, the north of Calicut in Malabar district (*see* map, plate xii) the Iravas have two endogamous groups, sub-castes, we may call them, one the Tiyas and the other an insignificant minority known as the Iyyors or Iravas. Tiyas, being regarded as the higher of the two, have only *sambandham*, a kind of morganatic marriage with Iyyor women. Iyyor men cannot marry Tiya women. Iyyors and Tiyas have a common Vannan, but separate barbers; they enjoy commensalism, address each other as though they were of the same sub-caste (*i.e.*, older men as *achchan* and women as *amma*).

The Palghat taluk is another strictly endogamous area, for, the Iravas here, known as Irava Panikkars, are a sub-caste of low status. The Irava Panikkars are distributed only in the Palghat, and parts of the Walluvanad taluks in Malabar district, and also in the northernmost parts of Cochin State. They are patrilineal, follow the same professions as other Iravas, but do not enjoy commensalism, nor do they have marriage with the rest. They do not have a barber sub-caste but depend for shaving on the Tamil barber, and for rituals an elderly member of their group does what a barber does for Iravas elsewhere.

In the Walluvanad taluk, the local popular name for the Iravas is Tandan, which is strictly speaking the title of the headmen. This name gained currency only in recent years. It is an instance of the whole being known by the name of the part.

For the rest of the central patrilineal area, the caste name, Irava holds good. In the southern half of it, however, a parallel name, Chova, is used. Chova is a simplified form of *chēkon*[1], which means "warrior attending on the king" and is again a title like Tandan, bestowed on individuals in older days by the district chiefs.

The southern matrilineal area, is divided into a northern and a southern marriage areas. In the southern half of the southern cultural division, an entirely different kind of internal organization has developed, and it is this area that has advanced in what are called "reform

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[1] Many old titles have been once caste names, *e.g.*, Nayar, Kurup, Pillai. When we speak of Nayars as a caste, it is relevant only to the recent past, after the breakdown of feudalism.

movements." The aristocracy among the Iravas here are known as ***Channars***, the name, Tandan, used for the headmen of the caste elsewhere, being the name of an entirely different caste of professional tree-climbers. Those who are engaged in toddy making are regarded here as of low status, whereas this profession is considered honourable in other parts of the country. The Channars are more or less endogamous (though the endogamy is breaking down), and, while their men may have morganatic marriage with commoner women, their women are seldom given in marriage to commoners. So, now, many Channar women are found remaining spinsters. Rich commoners on the other hand, encourage and tempt aristocratic youths to marry into their group for the sake of prestige. The rivalry between commoners and the old aristocracy within the caste vitiates village life everywhere among the southern Iravas. The aristocrats specialize in weaving, and there are many skilled weavers among them. They were once the only rich and influential men in the community, before the boom in the coir industry in the latter half of the last century made many of the commoners rich, which aroused jealousy in the mind of the aristocrats. Until about two decades ago, interdining between the aristocrats and commoners was not at all common. Two incidents from the life of the great poet of Malabar, the late Kumaran Asan, who was a commoner, show how strong the feeling was against commoners eating with aristocrats. Kumaran when he was a boy, was playing near an aristocratic house, where a feast was being held. Being hungry, he sat with other boys who were squatting in a row with leaves in front of them (plate iii, fig. 1). One of the elders who saw this, dragged the boy and ejected him. Later in his life, after rising to great eminence as a literary man, and as the secretary of the socio-political association of the Iravas, known as the S.N.D.P. Yogam, he married from an aristocratic family, and this marriage created a regular flutter in the orthodox dovecotes. But times had changed, and except mere expressions of disapproval, nothing more could be done. This class system within the caste, based not on profession (professional taxis is familiar enough), but on ancestral wealth, had become petrified in southern Travancore, while elsewhere, it was evident only as a tendency.

The major endogamous divisions are territorial. When there was little social intercourse between the various divisions, there was little cohesion between one division and the other, in spite of the fact that they were of the same caste, had the same professions and traditions. Political allegiance to three different rulers proved another obstacle to combination. Inter-marriage was then out of the question, and interdining was equally impossible. A few families from North Malabar who settled in Travancore and Cochin, remained a separate caste, not made free of the local Irava community. An Irava from Travancore, who settled in Calicut town and became an important citizen there, was never admitted as an equal member of the local Irava community. He was stigmatized as "weaver" for weaving was his hereditary profession.

The feeling against crossing the old barriers of local endogamy is, however, being slowly overcome, and several marriages between men of the central area and women of the north (Tiyas) have taken place in the course of the last twenty years. The reverse type of marriage, between men of North Malabar and women of the central area, has not taken place because of difficulties in inheritance, for North Malabar is matrilineal and the central area is patrilineal, and the children of the latter type of marriage can inherit the ancestral property of neither the mother nor the father. Another, perhaps the more important, reason is that women of the central and southern areas are generally less accomplished and advanced than their sisters of the north, and cannot compete with them. In spite of the several traditional divisions, the various sub-divisions of the Iravas have managed to unite on a common platform for politico-religious purposes. This feat was accomplished primarily through the work of their great leader in culture change (*see* Chapter VII). The development of the means of communication was an important material factor that led to the strengthening of the caste-tie between the loosely related sub-divisions. United under one great leader, and attempting to bridge the gulf of endogamy by inter-marriages, the whole caste gained in solidarity, and in the political sphere, in its bargaining power for more representation in the public bodies and services. The old scruples against interdining had disappeared except in the most backward areas.[1]

CASTE FUNCTIONARIES.

In each of the sub-divisions, the basis of the communal organization is the *tara*. From the point of view of each caste, there was no other social grouping of a higher order than the *tara*. Politically, of course, there were the village and the district heads, who were Nayars, but they had very little authority in the internal matters of the Iravas, except rarely as courts of appeal. The caste head of each *tara* was known as ***Tandan*** or ***Mukhyasthan*** in the north, ***Tandan*** in the central area, and ***Channan*** in the south. The office of the Tandan was hereditary, but the rulers occasionally created new Tandans, *e.g.*, the eldest woman of the Zamorin family had the dispensation of titles and office vested in her. Sometimes when population increased, a *tara* used to be divided; this is what happened, for example, at Mananteri (Kottayam taluk, North Malabar, *see* map, plate xii) where there was originally only one *tara*, Madappurabhagam, but now there are three others also. In North Malabar, the single office of Tandan or Mukhysthan is replaced in most cases by a joint council of four "elders" one of whom may or may not be known as a Mukhyasthan. The formula used in marriage rituals in North Malabar begins thus: "For the marriage of this Tiya of . . . clan and the Tiya woman of . . . clan, permission has been

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[1] Many other small divisions mentioned as sub-castes of the Iravas have already become blended with the main body of the caste, leaving no traces of their existence.

The blending of sub-castes is a feature of modern culture change in the case of other castes also, *e.g.*, the Nayars. This is the first sign of the weakening of the caste system.

asked of the Tandan of the *tara*, the four councillors, and the elders . . . " It is, thus explicitly shown that the head of the tara was the Tandan.

In the central area the Tandan is the sole head of his caste men in the *tara*. In some parts towards the south he has assistants known as *Ponambans*. The eldest member of the Tandan lineage had certain important dignities attached to his office. He had the privilege of travelling in a palanquin, which no commoner of any caste had ; he could carry a gold-handled knife and writing style ; he was not required to uncover his head or body in the presence of commoners of superior castes ; he could have the ceremonial silk umbrella carried over him, and the ceremonial lamp, carried in front of him, wherever he went on business. The Channans of Travancore, as we saw above, constituted themselves into regular class of aristocrats.

Below is given a native statement on the subject of the functions of the Tandan translated into English :—

> (1) " Settle caste disputes, eject from the caste those that should be ejected, and re-admit those who can be re-admitted ; to excuse offences on payment of *kiri* (small bag of money) ; (2) In the public matters of the village and for ceremonies in the houses of the chief men of the village, to execute their commands ' standing in front of all others of his caste ' (*i.e.*, as the leader) ; (3) Settle disputes among the castes below the Iravas and help the Nayar chief in settling them."

The legal functions of the Tandan are the most important and naturally they are uppermost in the mind of everyone, though they are rarely exercised. The Tandan's other duties are—

(1) To supervise the arrangements for marriage and other ceremonies of the Iravas of his *tara*, for each of which he is given a fee and gifts of betel leaves. He is expected to be proficient in all the traditional knowledge regarding ritual procedure.

(2) In the communal religious festivals of the village, as, for example, the annual *pūram* festival at the village temple, the contributions by way of cash or services are made through the agency of the Tandan. It may be the clearing of the shrubs from the temple compound, at others it may be the carrying of the pot of toddy (*kalaśam*) for ritual purposes, or it may be the ox-play (*see* plate iii, fig.3.).

(3) Supplying coconuts and tender fronds and inflorescence of the coconut tree for decorative purposes during domestic rituals for all superior castes.

(4) Relics of the political part of the Tandan's work consist in his acting as the link between his people and the local Nayar chief, wherever such a one still exists.

(5) His authority extends, not only over his caste, but also castes lower than the Iravas. He presides over the marriages of the artisans. Either he, or an agent

of his, has to accompany their marriage party; otherwise, the Tandans of the villages through which the party has to pass do not allow them to proceed.

(6) As an extension of his legal authority in the village, he is invited to attend joint councils of neighbouring Tandans to settle important disputes.

The legal aspect of the Tandan's caste court which aims at the maintenance of caste tradition is dealt with fully in the chapter on law.

The authority of the Tandan has weakened everywhere; in some localities, the function of the Tandan is fulfilled by a few influential men; in others, where individualism has developed, the Tandan's authority is not recognized, especially if the Tandan's social position is not backed by sufficient wealth; in yet others, where rituals themselves are being reformed, his knowledge of the traditional ways of conducting them is little in demand. Wherever the old village spirit has died out, the Tandan does not command the men for the communal work. Just as the educated Iravas have been trying to free themselves from the old caste traditions, the artisans and other castes under the control of the Iravas are discarding the authority of the Tandan.

Under the old economic conditions, the Tandans were, most of them, men of means and influence and had political backing. Changes in the political sphere removed the latter and changes in the field of economics resulted in many of the Tandan's subordinates becoming richer and more influential. " Money is on the cot; the (great) lineages in the dirt heap " runs a saying that refers to the " enthronement of money " and the " dethronement " of great families, now reduced to poverty. The new public opinion created mostly by social reformers and the English educated persons is definitely against traditional authority of any kind. It is no wonder, in these circumstances, that the younger generations of the families of Tandan's themselves think slightingly of the old duties and privileges attached to their families. They no longer insist on receiving the customary gifts, on being consulted on marriage questions, nor do they take interest in the adjudication of offences against caste. A few old men, derisively termed " old fashioned ", are the only people who try to act up to the standards of an earlier age.

The clash of norms which infringes on the authoritarian side of village life is illustrated by the following account of a caste dispute in Alavil *tara* near Cannanore (Chirakkal taluk). Kelan of the Keloth clan and seven other Iravas, who held modernist views on caste and interdining, dined with some members of the serf castes, as a step in social reform. The older men of the village assembled with the heads of the caste and resolved to ask the offenders to apologise and pay a fine, which if they did not do within the prescribed time, the services of the Vannan, the barber, and the right of interdining with the " pure " members of the caste would be withdrawn from the seven offenders. Notices were also issued to the relatives of the seven men not to have anything to do with them. A few years ago, these threats

would have compelled obedience, but now the laundries in the neighbouring town washed clothes better than the Vannan did, and there were "hair-cutting saloons" with large mirrors, chairs, etc., instead of the soapless service of the caste-barber. As regards the threat against the right of commensalism, the reformers had such a large number of the villagers on their side that, even if they were not going to be invited for feasts in the orthodox people's houses, it dit not seriously matter. Printed notices and accusations were published broadcast by both the parties and acrimonious discussions raged on the subject of caste traditions and new adjustments to changing conditions. One of the hand-bills contained a lecture to the "elders" on "returning from their blindness". Among other things, it said, "The world today is engaged in effecting reforms and finding out truth and virtue. The ship is sailing out towards the West, there is no use in your running from the bow to the stern and saying that you won't go West. You have to go with the rest. You do not know the conditions today of Hindus elsewhere. Muhammadans and Christians are being re-admitted into Hinduism. We are under a Christian king, who treats you and the Pariah alike. Our revered leaders have advocated interdining with the serf castes, and many have partaken of such casteless feasts . . . Many half-breeds there are among you, who have been born to Europeans. It is a well-known secret, that many of you have taken advantage of the position of dependence of the women of the serf castes and produced illegitimate offspring in them. And you persecute us for simply eating food with them. Our King Emperor, our visible God, does not observe caste or untouchability. Our great teacher has proclaimed that all men belong to one and the same caste, *viz.*, mankind. Don't go against the new traditions, the command of God, and the message of our teacher." A compromise was effected and the two parties had a feast in honour of the occasion.

The social mechanism through which the headmen of the caste could make their threats effective, was no longer operative, because, to put it in a nutshell, caste had weakened and with it the distribution of work in the community. When anyone could do a washerman's or barber's work in the towns, as many did, only giving the shop an English name, when women no longer believed that it was necessary to observe menstrual pollution and have the purifactory bath, and when those vested with traditional authority to enforce these customs were subordinated to the money power and influence of the reformers, the orthodox elders had to give way with a feeble show of resistance. In the old days, when there was no clash of norms, obedience to the authority of the Tandan could be enforced through the prohibition of ***mārru*** to the women of the offender's family. Without the ***mārru*** the women could not purify themselves after menstruating, and without purification they had to remain away from the kitchen, and from all their normal activities. The ***mārru*** was also required for purification after child-birth. The Tandan would issue orders to the caste-men not to have any dealings with the man under trial by his caste court. The barber would not shave such a person. No one would be able to flout the

authority of the Tandan, unless he left the village and took shelter in the towns near by. Many have thus escaped from the clutches of caste law and the fines levied by the Tandan. Remaining in the village without submitting to the Tandan would have meant social death by a thorough boycott. His relatives and friends would disown the offender to save themselves because they would be one with the Tandan in holding that he was an offender. From this position of relative stability and conformity to norms, Iravan society has swung to the bi-normal state mirrored in the dispute in the previous paragraph.

The communal labour organized by the Tandan for the temples has become a mere relic of the past in most localities. Some families who have being doing it, continue to do it more out of religious sentiment than as a part of their contribution to the common life of the village, and no one is in a position to enforce their doing the work. Instead of the upper castes acting through the Tandan, many of them merely get hold of the nearest Irava available to get them the articles for decoration and for rituals, which had to be got formerly through the Tandan of the village. In North Malabar, the supervision of the making of the funeral pyre, the cutting of the mango tree for the pyre, etc., was a function of the Tandan, but now, except in a few backward localities, any Irava is asked to do it. Similarly, for the marriage of the artisan castes, those who still observe the custom of inviting an Irava guide, get the nearest man available ; others dispense with the Irava altogether from their marriage party, and no one takes the trouble to find out whether the party is led or not by a Tandan.

Thus, what with their own younger men outgrowing the system as a consequence of their new English education, what with the necessary conditions for the smooth flow of authority of the Tandan having undergone subversive changes through the new education, new laws, new beliefs, and new economic conditions, there now survives only a shadow of the once strong internal government of the Iravan *tara*. The Tandan provided the social cement in the Iravan community of old. If a certain marriage wrs regarded as objectionable, against custom, or within prohibited kin, even on the marriage day, it could be stopped by a member of the community, if he told the presiding Tandan of the objection, when he would ask, " Has any one anything to say against this marriage ? " Now, such objections have to be raised by individuals, and there is no means of doing so effectively. So the breakdown of the authority of the Tandan has meant that the family or kinship groups have become the units in the socio-political organization, which constitutes the first stage in the transition from the co-operative village and caste groups, through the emancipated joint families, to the growing individualism that seems to be the ultimate goal of culture change in Malabar.

An important functional sub-caste (as opposed to the territorial sub-divisions) of the Iravas is that known variously as *Kāvutiyan*[*] (= ~~the Tiya or Irava of the temple),~~ *Adutton* (he that is near), or *Vātti* (teacher). In the following account the name Vatti will be used, since it is used by the largest number of Iravas south of Calicut.

[*] This word again has a long history. Kavuti, in ancient Dravidian meant a leader. It has nothing to do with Tiyan. The barber ~~had~~ was a leader in rituals and this leadership entitled him to the title. In North Malabar

the barber is called Nāpitān, Valanchiyan

In N. Malabar the Barber has the
additional job of lighting some
of the larger Irava temples
with wicks during the
annual festival season.
In some temples he is a full time
ritualist

The Vatti's position is one of slight inferiority to the Iravas. He calls an Irava older than himself as "elder brother," and those younger than himself by the personal name. All Iravas address the Vatti by his personal name only. If the Vatti had equal status with the Iravas, a younger person would have to suffix "elder brother" to the Vatti's personal name. The Vatti may eat in the same *pandal* (shed) where the Iravas eat, but he has to sit separately on the left side or "younger end," the right side or "the older end" being reserved for more important persons. The Vattis are endogamous. For their marriage Iravas are usually invited, but the food to be partaken of by them has to be cooked by the guests themselves. In North Malabar, Vatti women are occasionally married by Iravas, but the children of such marriages will not be Iravas, but only Vattis, nor will the wife ever be allowed to live in her Irava husband's house, or enter his kitchen. In the south, Irava-Vatti marriages are almost unheard of.[1] As a rule, the Vattis are very strict about not eating from castes of inferior status to the Iravas, they being in this respect, stricter than the Iravas.

The first and most important function of the Vatti is acting as the barber of the Iravas of his *tara*. He used to be paid in two half-yearly instalments, but now cash payment is becoming the rule. He goes about from house to house to shave the men, while his wife does the same for the women. When cropping the hair after European manner became the fashion with the younger people at the beginning of the present century, the Vatti was slow to change and acquire the new tools and the skill to use them, so that he lost many of his customers who went to the Tamil or Christian barbers of the bazaar for hair-cutting. The Vatti, however, is slowly realising the implications of the situation and now a pair of scissors and a comb are added to his equipment. Some younger Vattis now own "barber shops" in the bazaars where they cut the hair of all castes. Formerly, if a Vatti shaved a man of an inferior caste, he would have to pay a fine and undergo purification. The economic freedom of this subordinate dependent sub-caste of the Iravas is, however, very recent.

The declaration of independence of the Vatti is held in check by the fact that he derives a considerable income from the Iravas by acting in the capacity of quasi-priests at all important rites in connexion with birth, initiation, and death. He has to sprinkle purifactory fluids on the women to purify them ceremonially after confinement; and on the mourners after the period of pollution. For the initiation ceremony known as the *talikettu* (pp.) he has to decorate the booth where the ceremony is conducted and he and his wife sing songs and teach the girl the rudiments of the duties of adult women. He is usually a repositary of all village news and acts as the unofficial marriage agent. He is the assistant of the Tandan in his executive functions, and follows him wherever he goes on important caste business. When any contributions are made after marriages, the names

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[1] How the barber caste is recruited among the serf castes of Cochin is explained in my paper on the Nayadis (Mad. Mus. Bull. Vol. II, 4.).

are said aloud by the Vatti. For death ceremonies he performs various rites himself and guides the mourners in what they have to do. In some of the Irava temples the Vatti keeps the temple clean and makes the wicks for the saucers of oil used as lamps ; when acting in this capacity he is sometimes known as Variyan, which is also the caste name of one of the group A castes performing similar functions in temples belonging to the latter [1]. In North Malabar, the Vatti is called *Adutton* when he is assisting at rituals, at other times as *Kavutiyan*. In South Malabar, Kurup is another alternative name. In Travancore, the Vattis are also musicians, and doctors in addition, and their women midwives. Many of the women are experts in *ammānāttam* and songs, the former consisting in throwing three or four brass balls to and from the hand in a continuous stream, the movement of the ball and the jingling of the pellets within them, keeping time to the music.

Among the Iravas, to insult a man, he is told " You are a Kavutiyan." The linguistic generalizations show that the barber's part of the Vatti's profession is not one calculated to endow him with anything but a low status. For this reason the Vattis of the Walluvanad taluk have almost ceased to be barbers, retaining only the priestly function. The presence of the Tamil barbers helped this vocational " purging " in which the Vattis had the mute support of the Tandans, who, coming to know more and more of the practices of the group A castes, among whom the priest and barber are separate, acquiesced in the self-exalting movement of their Vattis. I do not know how long the process took to be accomplished, but Walluvanad has been an area where Hindu influence on the Iravas has been long and profound. The Vatti is more popularly known in Walluvanad as *adiyantarakkāran*, " the ritualist."

The position of the Vatti as a priest was also assailed from a new direction. When under the influence of the great teacher (p), anxious to adapt themselves to a higher standard of religious and ceremonial life, the advanced sections of the Iravas grew ashamed of the fact that their priest was also a barber, and that the rituals that he had as his stock in trade were crude in comparison with Aryan-Brahman rituals, out of their inferiority complex there arose the wish for ritual reforms which had their repercussions on the Vattis, for they were no longer required in the reformed rituals, and a new class of trained priests were being sent out to conduct the new rituals. The Vattis attended the rituals as before, but merely to receive their customary payments. The general trend everywhere is to dispense with the Vatti's services as a priest, and to retain him as a barber only. And so when the new form of rituals would become more popular in Walluvanad, the Vatti there, who has given up barber's work for the sake of the priestly one, may be altogether thrown out of work, unless he turns priest in the reformed manner, for which, so far, he has shown little promise.

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[1] This is another instance of the tendency for every caste to develop on the model of their betters which is regarded as ideal.

In Travancore many Vattis have already turned into practitioners of indigenous medicine, and their women into trained midwives.

The co-operative inter-relationship between the various castes has been broadly indicated in the earlier sections of this chapter. Here we shall specially refer to how the Iravas and the castes below them work together. The best occasion to watch this is a marriage in an Irava house. The Pana acts as the messenger carrying the letters of invitation written on palm leaf (now replaced among the educated by printed cards); he also gets the banana leaves for serving food on for the wedding guests; the carpenter makes all the ladles and planks necessary; the blacksmith brings knives for cutting vegetables; the village astrologer fixes the auspicious hour for the marriage; the Vannan makes the big ovens for cooking rice in bell-metal or copper vessels (plate vi, fig. 3); and the Paraya brings the basketry receptacles in which quantities of rice and snacks are carried for serving. Each of the above persons co-operating with the Irava celebrant of the marriage, must be of his village; it is only if he permits another man of the same caste from another village can deputize for him. For his services, each of them is paid in kind many times the price of the articles supplied by him. What is thus given is not regarded as wages, but simply as his "right," *i.e.*, his traditional share. No one who can afford to be liberal grudges paying these village functionaries amply, since displeasing them and making them grumble or complain after the marriage means a great loss of kudos. But here again, bad economic conditions of a great majority of the Iravas in industrial and suburban villages have made it difficult for them to meet the multitudinous obligations involved in employing these village functionaries. So they resort to buying cheap articles from the bazaar, and dispense with the traditional services of the artisans and others, who are given only some food. The poorer sections are forced to drop these old customary forms of co-operation on account of their poverty, but among the educated rich of the urban areas, in most instances, it is the growing money sense, and the love of economy that accounts for their lack of attention to inter-caste co-operation. The tendency is for all the customary services to be replaced by wage labour. And when economic exchange is substituted for social obligation there will be nothing left to hold these various communities together. The co-operative links are snapped, so to say, and castes cease to have common interests.

CHAPTER IV—KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE.

RAMAGE, CLAN AND ILLAM.

In this chapter we shall study the nature of the more intimate forms of inter-relationship between members of the Irava community based on descent, sex, marriage, and common residence. The last plays an important part both in reality and according to native formulation, for their saying runs : "An enemy, near you, is more useful in times of distress than a friend (by marriage) far away." Petty quarrels are forgotten in times of need and crisis, and neighbours rush to each other's aid. Death, for example is an occasion for reconciliation. The desire to have one's relatives nearby induces men to marry within a narrow radius of their own village. Fellow villagers are referred to as the persons who "bury you when you are dead." Men of one's own caste must do that, otherwise "you are dragged and buried like a dog." As children, they all play together, some of them go to the same Panikkar's (Kaniyan's) "writing house" as schools are called, and as adults they work together each contributing his mite to the common activities. They quarrel, of course, but reconciliation follows naturally, for which many opportunities are provided, the occasions of death or marriage or calamities being the commonest ones. When an individual or family grows more prosperous, envy is roused, but to counterbalance it there is always the happy feeling that there is someone to whom they can appeal in times of need, and such help is seldom denied. The spatial tie transcends the limits of caste ; it is as though the very fact that the villagers have drawn their nourishment from the same soil and had their early associations with the same set of things, gave them a claim on one another.

Families have always names known as "house names." A man's "house name" is prefixed to his personal name, is used on the occasion of his marriage, in documents, and in ordinary conversation. A man is proud to belong to what is called an "ancient *taravād*" *i.e.*, a clan well-known for a long time.

The "house names" in village M...are listed below :—

House name.	Numbers in the map (Text fig. 2).
(1) Ambadi	57, 65, 83, 92, 93.
(2) Ayinipalli	A. 3, 4, 24.
	B. 5, 59, 60.
(3) Atteparambil	96.
(4) Etakad	62.
(5) Karuttedath	38.
(6) Perumpalli	23.
(7) Ponnarasseri	75, 97.
(8) Vadasseri	78, 79, 79-A, 86, 104.
(9) Valiyapurakkal	6, 11, 13, 38.
(10) Vellaparambil	5, 107.

Of the ten house names, the last belongs to an insignificant sub-caste, Marayan, and as they are a part of a group belonging to the neighbouring village, need not be taken into account here. The remaining nine are all linked either by descent or marriage. Most of the ancestors of the present villagers came and settled here within the last 150 years and have their ancestral "root-stocks" as they call them, in villages three or four miles to the north. It was the extension of the coconut cultivation that brought them here with the Nayars. Families with similar house names occur, therefore, in those ancestral localities, and the great grandfathers of the present generation of inhabitants used to maintain contact with them. They used to meet annually for the celebration of the rituals (***kalam***) for the serpent gods of the open-air family shrines. But later the interest in such celebrations, and even the memory of the kinship tie were lost. They no longer observed death pollution, which is an index of kinship. But the common name still links them. For the large loose group, only nominally related at present in the manner just shown, I propose to apply the term "clan," which, for reasons given elsewhere, can be regarded as the appropriate translation for the Malayalam word ***taravad***.[1] To the kinship groups linked by descent and ritual associations incidental to kinship, such as the Ambadi "house" the term ramage[2] suggested by Dr. Raymond Firth aptly applies. The five joint families (Kudumbam) in the Ambadi ramage regard themselves as one ***Vīdu*** (or "house"). If any child of this ramage is asked for his "house name," out comes the answer "Ambadi." The second "house name," Ayinipalli, labels six joint families, but they belong to two different ramages, that do not voluntarily observe kinship obligations. In their case it was not a question of distance and lack of interest bringing about an involuntary fission in the ramage thereby making it into the looser clan. The members of this ramage quarrelled about three generations ago when one party refused to partake in the rituals when death took place in the other, but instead, had parallel ceremonies performed independently. They had a common serpent shrine, which was also "divided", the process consisting in a lamp being lighted from the old shrine, and placed in the newly prepared shrine. The whole process of fission of a ramage into two is known by the expression "dividing the serpent and the coconut frond", the latter being used in death rituals (see Chapter VII). Though the two sections of a divided ramage cease to have common domestic rituals and feasts, yet they continue to use relationship terms as though they were of still one group and marriage between them is impossible. A clan is as exogamous as a ramage is. A man may, however, talk familiarly with a clan sister, which he may not do with a sister of his ramage. Extending the tree simile used by Dr. Firth, a ramage is in the present instance a cutting transplanted from the original kinship

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[1] See A. Aiyappan, "Nayadis of Malabar," Madras Museum Bulletin, II, 4, p. 30. Rivers translated *taravad* as "joint family."

[2] In "*We, the Tikopia.*"

as it is an extension of the latter

tree. The fission of a ramage is, as we have seen, natural or artificial, but more often the former, the latter being exceptional as in the case just described.

We shall not deal at any length with Iravan "clan" since its importance in practical life is only in so far as it serves to regulate marriage, and the clan names, to remind people of the possible kinship in the past. Clan names are seldom dropped, though to differentiate the various ramages, they may become double barrelled, as for example, Ayinipalli Chulliparambil, the first being the clan name, the second the ramage name.

The meanings of some of the "house names" as far as they can be made out are of interest. Ayinipalli means "the house made of the *Ayini* tree (*Artocarpus hirsuta*); Etakkad, the "jungle between"; Karutedath, "black place"; Perumpalli, "the big house"; Vadasseri, "the northern village." It appears that these names were not fortuitous, but had definite connotations. Some probably arose because of the situation of the house, others from the nature of the house, or its location near some landmark; and yet others from the name of some remarkable individuals.

The Iravas of village M...are patrilineal. They are aware of the differences in the form of marriage, inheritance and descent between themselves, and their matrilineal neighbours, the Nayars. They are, most of them, not aware of the matrilineal principle that used once to regulate their marriage. The Iravas of each of the territorial subdivisions had several matrilineally inherited *illam* (or *kiriyam*).[1] A man should not marry a woman of the same *illam* as that to which he belonged, as she was to be regarded as his "sister in the *illam*." Now very few people remember their *illams*, nor is anyone particular about checking them at the time of marriage. *Illam* is an old Malayalam word meaning "house"; now it particularly means the house of a Brahmin, though in poetry it is used for any kind of house, *e.g.*, *irr-illam* for "the hut in which a pregnant woman is secluded for delivery." For the matrilineal Iravas, the *illam* meant a further extension of the matrilineal clan. But, for the patrilineal Iravas, it complicated the situation considerably. It meant to them that for marriages they had to exclude the patrilineal kin of the father, and the matrilineal kin of the mother. The *illam* was thus a concession to the bilateral principle in kinship reckoning. As long as people cared for it, it should have excluded the mother's matrilineal kin from being married. But for a patrilineal people, with patrilocal marriage, the maintenance of a matrilineal record must have been rather difficult. The mother's matrilineal kin, namely her mother's sisters' daughters, her sisters' daughters and so on, lie dispersed over a vast area. It was a matter of dispersal by marriage. The common *illam* name was the only remembrancer of matrilineal kinship. People in practice care now to avoid only such matrilineal kin in marriage, as they can recollect. The gradual disappearance of *illam* exogamy, I should regard as a natural change in culture not forced on a people by outside influences. It is an example of cultural atrophy.

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[1] *Kiriyam* is a Sanskrit derivative meaning "house."

For their historical interest alone, I give below a list of *illams.*

North Malabar.

1 Bavukka (a fruit ?).
2 Kannan kuti (? house).
3 Korikkalan (fowl-leg-he).
4 Manankuti (sky-house).
5 Nellikka (fruit of *Phyllanthus emblica*).
6 Parakka (a fruit ?).
7 Patayankuti (fighters' house).
8 Pullanni (?).
9 Talakkzttan (head-hill-he).
10 Tenankuti (? house).
11 Vangeri (name of a big tank ?).
12 Velakkamkuti (bright-house ?).

Note.—*Kuti* in all the above names means "house" or "hut."

Central Area.

1 Alam palli (*Ficus* (?) house).
2 Amat.
3 Ayini (*Artocarpus hirsuta*).
4 Ariri.
5 Arikkara (? bank).
6 Chattanat.
7 Chembramadanam.
8 Cherayi (name of village).
9 Chettana.
10 Chirrini.
11 Chitrampalli (picture-house).
12 Chora (blood).
13 Elancheri.
14 Kakkad.
15 Kanta.
16 Kantanasseri (a village).
17 Kanuyam.
18 Kavandi.
19 Kavil (grove).
20 Karutta (black).
21 Kirakkiniyedat (eastern-room-place).
22 Kotayat.
23 Kotta (fort).
24 Kunta.
25 Kunna (hill).
26 Mannat.
27 Mangala (a Brahmin village).
28 Marattanat.
29 Netumpura (long house).
30 Ola (palm frond).
31 Paramba (compound).
32 Pava (Marionette).
33 Peri.
34 Rantancheri (second village).
35 Tekkiniyedat (in the place of the southern room).
36 Tirutti (island).
37 Tuvvadam.
38 Ullam (inside).
39 Vata.
40 Vatakkiniyedat (in the place of the southern room).
41 Vayi.
42 Vella (white).
43 Velli (silver).
44 Vellini.
45 Vetti (mame of a tree).

Southern Travancore.

1 Muttillam.
2 Chori illam.
3 Mayyanat illam (a village).
4 Matampi illam.

(I am told that among the Channar caste of Tinnevelly District these *illam* names are found.)

This list is not exhaustive, but it shows that they are more numerous than was believed by previous writers on the Iravas who were misled by the number "four-eight" mentioned in the marriage formulae. In North Malabar, where it was said that there are only eight *illams*, I have listed twelve. Iyer's informant is said to have told him that the Koy(r)ikkalan *illam* was considered the highest, but in a native formulation Talakkottan is given as the leading *illam*. In the central area also, all the *illams* are not believed to be of equal status, Mannat and Cherayi ranking high.

In Southern Travancore, each of the first three *illams* is believed to have a peculiar characteristic common to all its members. Aristocratic bearing characterises the first *illam*; bravery, the second; intelligence, the third. The word Matampi, which is the name of the fourth illam, means "the attendants of a feudal chief."

I have no doubt that these *illams* were clan names of a by-gone period, which were remembered to regulate exogamy. The names, by long use, have undergone modifications, so that it is difficult now to find out their true meanings.

Only one instance came to my notice of the operation of the rule of *illam* exogamy. My informant, an old woman of Parassini-Kadavu (Chirakkal taluk, North Malabar), told me that years ago a man known to her married an *illam* sister without knowing it. Somehow the fact that he had violated the rule was discovered after about five years by which time he had three children. The "elders" of the village ordered him to relinquish his wife and children, which he refused to do. Social sanctions, such as the withdrawal of the right of interdining and the services of the washerman were then set in operation against the unfortunate man, who, unable to bear the situation, left for Singapore to earn a living there. According to this same informant, there are two more *illams* to be added to the list for North Malabar, namely, Kāta and Kannurkuti, but as I had no opportunity of verifying their correctness, I have not included these in the list.

The "elders" of North Malabar used occasionally to admit men to the superior *illams*. Only members of the aristocratic *illams* were allowed to have a silk scarf for their brides. If a man had no *illam*, *i.e.*, if he had forgotten it, he could say he belonged to the Parakka *illam*; hence the common saying, "If you have no *illam*, then you are of the Parakka *illam*."

Space, time and economics control kinship ties and bring about the natural changes in them. We have seen how migration from one village to a neighbouring village three or four miles away brings about a gradual fission in ramages. The clan is the product of the operation of time and space on a ramage. Going further back in time, we had the more hazy *illams*, a kind of fossilised clans, embodying once an active kinship principle, but with the expansion and dispersal of its members in space, reduced to a vague name. The part played by economics in kinship is great, because, as is well known, kinship is based on a series of

reciprocal obligations. When economic conditions are easy, these obligations are fulfilled, but the grinding poverty of most of the Iravas at present makes them care little for the kinship duties except of the most pressing kind. Larger groupings such as the clan are of significance to the rich, among whom kinship ties are maintained intact for longer periods and for several generations, while among the poor, there are economic limitations placed in the way of conserving remote kinship.

KINSHIP IN ACTION.

A closer examination of kinship configuration can be made in concrete sociological situations such as the death of an important member of the caste. The impact of death sends its vibrations in all directions in the community, and excites within it responses that reveal the most intimate aspects of kinship ties. An observer, not at all acquainted with the actors in the tearful drama following death, if he is somewhat familiar with the culture of the people, can easily make out the nature of the relationship of each of the individuals in the "death-house" (*i.e.*, the house where death has taken place) with the deceased person. In the confusion that rages about the corpse till its burial, the observer's attention will be mainly distracted by the wild wailing of the woman, but he will not fail to observe that the widow, mother or the eldest daughter covers her head when coming out of the room where the body lies. All the village artisans have already been told off to their respective duties by the elderly men who have come in. The Vannan is digging the "cremation pit" (if it is a cremation), the Pana has been sent with messages to all relatives, the dead man's sisters, daughters, and his relatives-in-law. Till their arrival, the cremation or burial cannot take place, but preparations are vigorously made in the meanwhile. As no cooking or eating is permitted in the "death-house" the small children are taken out and fed at a neighbour's. The men and women of the village come in, and as each woman joins the wailing group the cry grows in volume. "To see death" (*i.e.*, visit the mourners) is a sacred duty imposed by common residence. Relatives by marriage bring gifts of betel leaves and tobacco, quantities of which will be required to be given to the large number of visitors. The men remain outside on the verandahs, while the women remain in with the body, by which a lighted lamp is kept continuously burning from the moment of death. It is the duty of the eldest daughter to watch this lamp ("the shadow lamp"), replenish it with oil and renew the wicks and on the conclusion of the mourning, the lamp becomes hers, and if she is married she can take it with her to her husband's house. In wailing, the women show the intensity of their grief by beating their breasts with both their hands, and by wild exclamation. In case there is no genuine sorrow, or if the sorrow is affected, the people who watch the mourning make comments later on. "Her wailing was not honest, she was beating her breast carefully," so runs a common form of comment. The widow of the dead man uses endearing terms of address, which she does not use in public on other occasions. She may be heard

to say " My lump of gold, my gold, I have been deceived (by Fate). Oh, God of Death, have you no eyes ? What refuge have I and my young ones ? " Elderly women of the village try to console her and say, " Look at me, I am a widow. When the ' quantity of rice allotted to us is exhausted[1] everyone of us has to go."

When the ceremonies begin, several ceremonial names are used to designate sections in the assembly of caste men in the " death house." The first person who begins his ritual activities is the ***iṇangan***, who should belong to a " house " that is absolutely unrelated to the " house " of the dead person. The word ***inangan*** means " friend." The ***inangan*** assists the barber priest in arranging the materials for the funeral rituals (*see* chapter VII). He swathes the dead body in the shroud, and cuts off a piece of it (later called ***sesham***, " remnant ") and gives it to the son (who is the chief mourner) who should have it on him at all times ; on every subsequent day, he has to be in attendance to assist in the daily rituals ; the ***inangatti, i.e.***, the wife of the ***inangan*** assists at the rites performed by women ; on the anniversary of the death, he is made to represent the spirit of the deceased and is ritually fed. Other functions[2] of the ***inangan*** on the occasion of old fashioned marriages also had better be stated here. He accompanies the marriage procession, and in the ritual creation of the marriage " tie ", he throws grains of rice on the head of the groom and bride, and touching their heads one after the other, declares them man and wife of such and such a " house." Two " houses " act as ***inangans*** mutually, yet if later they happen to be connected by marriage, both of them have to look for new ***inangans***. In the case of Tandans or local heads of Iravas, they will not officiate as ***inangans***, since it involves work which will demean them.

The ***inangan*** shares the characteristics of a priest temporarily particularly during death ceremonies. When the immediate kith and kin of the deceased person are stunned by the shock of their calamity, by the institution of the ***inangan***, they are saved from the unpleasant duty of collecting and preparing the materials for the rites. The relatives by marriage (***bandhukkal***) are guests in the village, and so, are not expected to work. While the kin mourn, the caste men of the village prepare for the disposal of the dead body. The feast on the first day of mourning is at the expense of the son-in-law of the deceased man, if he has a married daughter, or by the relatives of his daughter-in-law. The cooking is again done by villagers, unrelated to the mourners, as the latter are busy with the rituals. The patrilineal relatives of the deceased are now known as ***pulakhār*** (*i.e.*, " those who observe death pollution ") among whom are included all the relatives not only of the man's own " house " but also of others. It is only the agnatic relatives of the dead man's own " house " (***śeshakhār***)

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[1] Except in accidental death or death by sorcery, the belief is that every person dies when the quantity of food set apart as his share by God has been consumed. This is another way of expressing the fatalistic notion that each man's span of life is predestined.

[2] For other details about *inangan* among other castes, *see* Aiyappan, *op. cit.* (1937) and *Man*, 337, 1932.

that observe death tabus to the full extent. Among these latter all the people older than the deceased do not make the daily oblations, though they observe the tabus for the thirteen days of mourning. Among the ***bandhukkal*** are included the dead man's sisters' sons who observe death tabus and offer oblations.

Situation of local and kinship groups at death.

Desakkār or villagers.	*Seshakkar* and other agnatic relatives.	*Bandhukkal* or affinal relatives.
	(*a*) Belonging to other ramages agnatically linked to the dead man's— Partial death-pollution.	
General help ...	(*b*) Seshakkar— (1) Older men. Only pollution. No oblations.	(*c*) No pollution. Economic contributions.
Inangan— Ritual assistance.	(2) Younger men, including sons. Pollution and oblations.	(*d*) Sister's children. Pollution[1] and oblations.

TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDS.

The kinship situation described in the foregoing paragraphs pertains to the patrilineal central area. In the "matrilineal" north and south, the dead man's matrilineal kin take the leading places (*a*) and (*b*), his sister's children led by the eldest take the place (*b*), 2 in the above table. Whereas, in the "patrilineal" area, the sons lead in the ritual, in the "matrilineal" areas the sisters' sons take the most prominent part. This is in conformity with the matrilineal inheritance and descent followed in the latter places. So here a man inherits not his father's "house name" but his mother's, marriage being mostly patrilocal, the wife lives with her husband, but on his death, she and her children have to return to their matrilineal "house" and live under the protection of the mother's brother (***ammaman***). The grown-up sons may, especially if they happen to belong to rich families, return to their own "house" earlier to assist the mother's brother in the management of the property, which later they have to take sole charge of. Thus in a matrilineal household, a man usually has his own wife and children, as temporary residents, and his widowed sisters and their children as permanent residents. The legal subordination of the former to the latter is reflected, as we have just seen, at the time of the death rituals.

The personnel of a "patrilineal" family in the central area is of a more permanent character, since the children inherit the father's house and property, and the mother continues to live with them even after she is widowed. If widowed early in life, she may either

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[1] The sister's children are grouped with their father's section, though they should be under the agnatic category and are so in the rituals.

re-marry, or live with her own brothers. But unlike her widowed sister in a matrilineal "house" where she has proprietary right and has a superior status to that of her brother's wives, the widowed sister of the patrilineal area returning to her brothers has to live in subordination to her brother's wives. She cannot inherit her father's property and has no claim on her husband's if she has no male children. Thus, the matrilineal system, though it involves considerable shifting and moving about, ensures women some security.

We have seen above that the chief difference in the kinship situation in the "patrilineal" and "matrilineal" areas lies in the greater importance given to the agnatic relatives in the former, and to the matrilineal relatives in the latter. The difference is not brought out so clearly when a superficial examination is made on the basis of residence. We will visit a few households and list their inmates.

I. Patrilineal area, House No. 3 *(see village map).*

1 Widowed mother.
2–5 Second son, his wife and two children ; the husband and wife are teachers.
6–8 Third son and his wife and child ; he is a toddy tapper.
9 Fourth son, a boy at school.
10 An unmarried daughter.

The eldest son lives in house No. 4. His wife and his mother used to quarrel. The villagers thought that he was a henpecked husband, and so he yielded to his wife's persuation to partition the common property and live separately. The widow has six daughters, all of them married except the fifth. The first daughter is a widow herself, but she has grown-up children, so she continues to live with them. The third daughter is married to two brothers. The sixth has married her second brother's wife's brother, *i.e.*, the two men have "exchanged" sisters, which custom reflects the difficulties women are beginning to experience in getting married.

II. Patrilineal area. Polyandrous "house."

1–2 Two brothers (farmers).
3–4 Their children by the first common wife who died.
5 Their second common wife.
6–8 Their children by the second wife.

The brothers continued to have a common wife. They said to me, "Our children by our first wife will be uncared for if we have separate families."

III. Patrilineal area. Polyandrous "house."

1 Old father (farmer).
2–4 Eldest son, his wife and boy ; their two daughters have been married away.

5 Second son; spent his youth as a labourer in Colombo, and returning, did not marry, but joined in a polyandrous partnership with his elder brother.
6–7 Third son and his wife.
8 A married sister, but as her husband is in Ceylon, she lives with her father and brothers, only visiting her husband's house very rarely.

The wife of the eldest son, a masterful personality, though subject to occasional fits of madness is the real mistress of the household; her two husbands and the other women of the household show great regard for her. In her own "paternal" house she had seen better days as a young girl, and reverses in fortune had made her marry beneath her station in life.

IV. Matrilineal area in Travancore.

1–2 Father and mother (rich family, owns several coconut gardens).
3 First daughter.; married to a judicial officer in the Travancore State Service. Marriage sterile.
4–5 Second daughter; married to an employee in the postal department, who lives with his wife and her parents.

(A third daughter ran away with an Irava of low status. The father being an old aristocrat could not brook the idea of her marrying him.)

These daughters are light brown in complexion and have fine features, and so were able to get men in Government service, prized very much in the marriage market as husbands.

V. Matrilineal area in Travancore.

1–2 Father and mother (rich coir merchant).
3–6 Second daughter and her children.
7 The husband of the second daughter; spends most of his time here.
8 Son at college.
9 Daughter at college.
10–12 Smaller children.
13 Sister's daughter of 1 (she is also brother's daughter of 2).

The eldest daughter is married to a rich business man near by and lives with him, calling on her parents frequently to help her mother.

The father of 1 (who is also the mother's brother of his wife) lives in a separate house with his daughter's children (who are orphans); one of the three, a sickly girl 13 living with her mother's brother. The other two are boys, one employed as a clerk in Travancore State Service and the other a student. According to the old law, these boys had a right to half the self-acquired property of their maternal uncle 1 but recent legislation has put an end to it.

Proof to [illegible] Government Press,
[illegible] Buildings, Madras [illegible]
Department

VI. Matrilineal Area. North Malabar.

1 Father, a retired judicial officer.
2–6 Mother and four children.
7–9 A widowed sister and her two sons.

One has another sister, an old widow, but she lives with her own son. An elder brother of one, is an old batchelor, comparatively poor, and wasted his life in bad company. The responsibility of supporting the widowed sister, and her sons and of educating them has fallen on one. The eldest of the two boys, 8, wanted to marry the eldest daughter of 1 but the wife said, " Already we have a heavy burden. Marrying my daughter to him means making it heavier." It may be mentioned casually that the inducement for a man to give his daughter in marriage to his sister's son is present only if he is heir to riches to be matrilineally inherited. If he has no ancestral property worth the name, but only self-acquired property, marrying his daughter to his sister's son strengthens the latter's claims on him.

A cursory glance through the above list is enough to show that the households are more or less alike whether they are " matrilineal "[1] or " patrilineal." Unmarried sisters remain with their brothers in both. The real difference is in the matter of widowed women, the contrast being shown in the first and last households.

STRESSES AND STRAINS ON FAMILY TIES.

The tendency for brothers to live together is greater in agricultural families than in the families of workers, or salaried employees. In agriculture a good deal of co-operation is necessary and it is advantageous for brothers to work together. Common residence, polyandry and levirate are linked together. The bed rock of Irava joint family must have been the economic advantages of common residence and co-operative work. Such advantages are the least in mainly industrial villages. As soon as the eldest son is married, the introduction of a stranger into the household disturbs the old freedom and ease in the relationship within the family. These difficulties are overcome to some extent by the daughter-in-law being entirely subordinated to her husband's mother. In industrial villages where her earning power is as good as that of any other member, she finds it irksome, to be in a position of subordination. Then there is the problem of accommodation in small huts of the poorest, and so among this class of people marriage is soon followed by the setting up of a new household. It is among propertied people that the branching of a household is postponed to later dates. Two or three married brothers may continue to live together under the same roof as long as the father (in patrilineal " houses ") is alive to supervise the management of

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[1] The real hundred per cent matrilineal people of Malabar are the Nayars of the central and southern divisions among whom under each household, only the matrilineal kin are found. Marriage is matrilocal, the wife and children paying visits, on rare occasions only, to the man's " house."

the household. They have to pool their income and the wives have to work under the supervision of the mother. A joint family where several married brothers live in peace and concord under one roof, with the eldest brother at the head, without the quarrels and bickerings, was the Irava ideal of "family" life, and it remains true of the people to-day with the exception of those most "advanced people" who want to have the English type of family life. Some of the more substantial agriculturists and businessmen are able to maintain the ideal form of joint family, but there are various elements of clash in such a household. The mother-in-law has certain traditional notions of her own authority over her daughter-in-law, and the remembrance of her own period of nonage under her mother-in-law. She allots work to the women in the household, *i.e.*, her unmarried daughters and her daughters-in-law (the latter described as "women who have been brought in", though the relationship term for them is "***marumakal***"[1]). To her own daughters she gives only light work, forcing the daughter-in-law to slave day and night, so that in the early stages of their life in a joint family "the women who have been brought in" form a united party, with their mother-in-law and sisters-in-law (***nāttūn***) as their common enemy. The native expressions "***ammāyi amma por***" and "***nāttūn por***" mean respectively, the "mother-in-law's (w.s.) rancour' and "sister-in-law's (w.s.) rancour." The domestic quarrels in poorer families centre about the distribution of food. The mother-in-law is often accused of not giving her daughters-in-law enough to eat. An extreme case that I heard was that of a woman who was starved in the night for nearly three years by her mother-in-law. She used to eat the crude rice gruel that was given to the cattle late in the night. One night her husband saw her eating the stuff when he went to look at the cattle in the shed. He was painfully surprised, for she had not at all complained to him about his mother's cruelty. The next night when his mother served him his supper as usual, the son refused to eat, saying, "There is a person here who has been eating only the food that is given to the cattle. I don't want to eat anything at night hence forward." The father heard the whole story and was very much pleased with his daughter-in-law's forbearance and patience. "She has by her patience shown that she is interested in the "house". She could have gone away instead of suffering here. She wanted to be here, she did not complain." Saying this, the old man, it is said, handed her the keys, which meant she became the mistress of the house, in the place of her mother-in-law.

In a quarrel between his wife and his mother, filial duty requires that a man should support his mother. Even if he feels that his mother is in the wrong, a young married man is reluctant to take his wife's side actively, though he may do so later. The mother's complaint will be, "My son has got a wife. He thinks no more of his mother who carried him

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[1] The general scheme of relationship terms, changes in their use and kinship attitudes are described in my paper on *Nayadis* (*op. cit*).

ten months in her abdomen. His wife's people have charmed him away. That 'daughter-of-a-dog', my daughter-in-law, she has been uttering "pillow-spells" (the equivalent of 'curtain-lectures') in his ears against me." To admit that one is under the influence of a woman, though she be one's wife, is a shame, so in the case of assertive sons, the mother-in-law tyranny will lead to the establishment of new households; in other cases it may lead to a divorce, preceded by her husband's "taking her back" to her paternal "house".

In the case of a man marrying his mother's brother's daughter, there is the likelihood of the "mother-in-law's rancour" being mitigated by the fact that the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law are more closely related. When two men have "exchanged" their sisters, the mothers-in-law in both the "houses" have to be very careful, lest the repercussions of the tyranny in one place are felt at the other also. This is the reason for the unpopularity of such marriages.

It should not be understood that mothers-in-law are always tyrants and the daughters-in-law meek sufferers. In many cases they get on smoothly, and in other cases, the mother-in-law may be reduced to a position of subordination to the daughter-in-law when the latter has established herself in her husband's confidence. The son pensions off the unwilling mother and hands over the control of his household to his wife.

Mothers are as a rule more interested in their daughter's children than in their son's children. They are always eager that daughters who have been married out of the house should be pleased with gifts sent them, that they should be invited periodically to spend long holidays in their parental home. The more a mother's concern for her daughters, the greater worry and expense for her sons and daughters-in-law. Widowed mothers are found, in the majority of instances, sticking to the youngest son, as he is usually the last to marry.

When the father and mother, especially the former, are no more, the joint family, which strictly speaking should be called a multiple family, has less cohesive force within it. The eldest son steps into the father's place as the head of the family, and if favourable circumstances exist, such as sufficient ancestral wealth for comfortable living and a long fraternal tradition, he may be able to maintain the multiple family intact. But in most cases where such initial advantages are not present, there is the desire for self-acquisition and unwillingness to pool individual incomes. Every individual wants to see his own children well provided for. Under old pre-British ecnomic conditions, the brothers in a multiple family had almost the same kind of work to do and, barring minor individual differences, each contributed equal share to the common income. But with the expansion of the economic field, the difference in the earnings between brothers became considerable enough to upset the old system of domestic economy. The man who earns more, feels that he has a right to keep part of it for himself, to be spent on his wife and children. Even if the brother is self-sacrificing enough to forego his claim to his income, his wife may not agree to it. Native opinion is extremely clear on this last point, for it is said, "Four "*kudumas*" (men's tufts of hair)

will get on together, but not four '***mudis***' (women's tufts of hair)" which means, it is easier for a few men to get on amicably under one roof than for an equal number of women. The fraternal disagreements that we hear of arise out of quarrels over the distribution of their incomes, contributions to the common feasts and celebrations, the manner of meeting the expenses of the marriage of sisters who were not married when the father was alive. The law is not clear on many of these points, *e.g.*, should a younger brother who was not earning at the time of a sister's marriage pay his share when he begins to earn later on? Custom and common sense say that he need not, but in suits that come up before civil courts in Malabar such moot points are raised. Differences in the income of brothers, and diversity of occupations coupled with the growing anxiety to provide for one's children lead to the break up of the patrilineal joint family.

In practice, it is usual for the eldest son to separate first from the partnership, and then for the others to follow him when they have a growing family. The result is that the youngest son is very often left with the parents in the ancestral house.

In those parts of Malabar where Iravas still practice polyandry, and several brothers have a common wife, many of the economic factors that lead to the disruption of the joint family are less active, but their fraternal unity breaks to pieces on the rock of sexual jealousy, the inhibition of which is removed by the new education and new views on sexual relationship (see section on Polyandry, p. 98).

The tendency for the disruption of the joint families has meant further difficulties for the women among the patrilineal Iravas. Formerly, widowed or unmarried sisters were gladly supported by their brothers, but living as separate families, none of them feel it their individual responsibility and try to shirk it. Similarly it has increased the dependence of the married woman on her husband, as she cannot look for the traditional support that once brothers used to give to divorced sisters.

Now, coming to the matrilineal joint family of the Iravas, usually described along with that of other castes of Malabar, such as the Nayars as "indivisible" and as "the most perfect form of joint family", we have already seen that it contained in its very organization the seed of its disruption, the clash between the legal heirs of a man and his own children. The head of a matrilineal family (the mother's brother, ***kāranavan***) had dictatorial powers and could alienate the family property as he liked. To remove him from his office as the manager of the household would have meant long litigation. The wife of the ***karanavan*** (***ammayi***) is interested to scrape together as much wealth as she can while her husband is alive, as she and her children have to leave for their own "house" on his death. When the matrilineal law was working in its unmodified manner, the self-acquired property of a man lapsed to his matrilineal heirs on his death, if he did not take care to give it to his children. It was a curious state of affairs, and many people wonder how such a system managed to

survive as long as it has done. In one of the most popular ballads of North Malabar, the old father of the hero, when asking his son to take his cousin as his assistant in a fencing match, says, "I made no distinction between you, my son, and Chandu, my sister's son. When feeding you both as children, I placed one of you on either of my thighs. You can trust him, he will never deceive you." But the cousin had an old grudge against the hero, who had stood, some years ago, in the way of his marrying Unni Archa, his (the heroe's) brave sister and so he did deceive the hero. The strength of the matrilineal tradition was so strongly ingrained in the older generation of Iravas that they had learnt to have equal love for their own and sister's children. Even in these degenerate days, it is not difficult to find matrilineal Iravas slaving for the sake of their sisters and their children. The maintenance of the prestige of the "house" was a duty cherished by the heads of these joint families. Public opinion would have condemned a man who had fleeced his matrilineal heirs to give his wife and children more than what was customary,—food and clothing when they lived with him, and clothing only, if they were in their own "house". When it became the fashion to give children an English education, which was costly in the higher grades, the question arose as to who should bear the expense, the father or the mother's brother, and a new custom was almost established that giving higher education was the duty of the father. Meanwhile, as the result of the new egocentric attitude that had been developing, the craze for acquiring private property[1] while remaining managers of joint families, seems to have spread; public opinion began to swing to the other extreme, namely, that the children of one's own loins claimed one's attention and means before everything else. When the restraining forces of tradition weakened, the love for one's own children asserted itself ruinously to the interests of the matrilineal family.

The intensity of the clash between the maternal uncle and his heirs can be best understood from the number of murders it has led to. Sisters' children have often put away an uncle by strangling him. Actual fights between sons and nephews are more numerous. Just one illustration will serve to clarify the problem: Karivellur is a very backward, rural village in North Malabar, on the borderline between the Malayalam-speaking and Kanarese-speaking areas. English education has left the village almost untouched, there being only a couple of English-knowing people among the Iravas there, and these two are the people who bring new ideas from the towns. I expected to hear very little of clashes in the matrilineal joint families here. But I heard of a twenty-year old quarrel between two rival sections of relatives. A father gave a coconut garden, claimed to be his private property, to his sons, who erected a house in it, and the father and sons lived there. It was quite near the old man's own "house" where his widowed sister and her children lived. When the old man died, the sons and nephews jointly celebrated the funeral rites. Soon after, the old man's

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[1] Such wealth is called "secret earning". Cf. the statement of a member of a matrilineal joint family: "I will keep my savings myself, invest them without my brothers knowing it, and make jewels for my wife."

legal heirs wanted that the garden given to the sons should be returned ; they tried to pull down the house, came to blows, and in the criminal case that followed, the sons won. There was no civil action, which we should think was the natural thing for the nephews to have taken. Old custom was in the favour of the nephews, but the new traditions which the judge-made law supported were in the favour of the sons. So did the former resort to customary sanctions, but here again the new law went against them.

Many have sung paeans in praise of the joint family system as a co-operative social unit, the best institution which prevented pauperism and obviated the necessity for old age pensions in India ; as a school in which the growing child received lessons in the ways of communal life ; as a miniature socialist community where equality prevailed in spite of differences in earning capacity. It is admitted that it was suited to the rural economy of India, but not to the changing conditions of the modern urban and urbanised areas. So even at the time of Maine's writing of the " indivisible " joint family of Malabar, they had ceased to be indivisible. Division used to take place among the sisters in the " house " into what might be called matrilineages. Recent legislative enactments have given legal sanction to the growing custom of partitioning to all matrilineal families except those who register themselves as a joint concern. A man's self-acquired property, even if he dies intestate, goes to his children according to the new law (See chapter on Law).

The chief factors that have led to the disruption of joint families economic are. To these have to be added other causes in the realm of rituals and beliefs. Rituals in which all the members of a " house " have to take part, are losing their importance and significance. New education has imported new ideas of family life, monogamy, etc., which again have their influence on joint family life. Most people, including some old men, are glad that the natural family life is permitted by law, but others feel sorry that the great " houses " are disappearing, and with them pride of the people in their clans. Sentiment apart, mismangement of the *Kāraṇavan* together with their unwieldiness as economic units has led to the impoverishment of many joint families. As the legal guardian, the mother's brother, neglected his heirs, the responsibilities of the father increased. Both these tendencies worked in the same direction. Relatives dividing their property would formerly be regarded with contempt. Neighbours would say, " They have divided their pots and pans." Now it is no longer a shame to ask for one's share and quit from the joint family.

According to some native theorists, matrilineal families originated in response to the peculiar needs of the society when, as during the feudal days, young and middle-aged men were called away to fight for their chiefs, and their families had to be left with their closest relatives. So even according to native opinion also there is no justification for the continuance of an obsolete system of family organisation based on mother-right. Among the patrilineal Iravas the joint family tradition had never been as strong as among the others, and its disappearance is not lamented by any one. The Iravas may be regarded as a ' progressive '

society, applying Maine's index of progress, namely, "dissolution of family dependency and the growth of individual obligation in its place.[1]"

DOMESTIC LIFE.

The understanding of the domestic arrangements in an Irava household necessitates a brief description of the houses themselves. Each house stands on its own grounds and is often fenced in, access to the enclosure being gained, in the case of the more-well-to-do houses through "gate-houses", and in the case of the poorer ones, by a simple stile or opening in the fence (plates v; vi; fig. 1). In agricultural areas, very near the entrance, there is the cattle shed for cows, buffaloes and bullocks; there may be a shed for keeping firewood and a small building for storing paddy.

The living house varies in size and architecture according to the means at the command of the inmates. Rich people have double-storied tiled houses, while the poor have low thatched huts with rough clay walls. The floor is always smeared with cowdung and polished with a roller of grantite. The following is the description of a medium-sized house of N. Malabar. Running all round the house is a yard (*murram*) which is broader usually in front. This yard is kept clean by being swept morning and evening and sprinkled with water. The yard is important, because all important ceremonies and feasts are held in temporary sheds built there. From the yard one steps on to a low outer verandah. It is there that the men sit when they are at home and receive their friends or guests. Women make use of this part of the house only when the elderly men are away. Through the main door, one enters into what is called the "inside verandah". This is the dining room for the men, visitors and guests, and by night the sleeping room for the younger boys and girls. At the extreme north there is the kitchen (*adukkala*) where women work to spend their leisure. Adjoining it is another room (*vatakkina*) used mainly by the women as a sleeping room, store room and reception room. In smaller houses the *vadakkina* is usually dispensed with. The central room is divided longitudinally into two, the front one, *padinnārra*, and the back one, *chāyippu*; the former should never be entered by strangers, and is used by the husbands of the women of the "house" when they come on visits, and at other times, by the younger married men; the latter is used by women during their periods of menstrual seclusion and at other times for sleeping. When men who have married from "the house" pay visits, the males of the house sleep on the verandah, if there is no heavy rain. The southern room (*tekkina*) is generally used by the eldest male of the family, and offerings to ancestors are made there.

The bigger houses are built round a central courtyard. In addition to the usual verandah, there is a broad projecting verandah known as *pūmukkham* ("flower-face"), which serves as a reception room. The rooms are named "eastern room", "southern room", etc.,

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[1] *Ancient Law*, (ed. C.K. Allen), pp. 139-140.

according as they are to the east, south, etc., of the courtyard. The spacious rooms round the courtyard permit of the house being able to accommodate a large number of people. The *padinnārra* or " western room " is subdivided into three rooms, which serve different purposes in different localities. The " southern room " is used in most areas as the " sacred " room, for offering food to the spirits of ancestors, and as a sleeping room ; the central, as a strong room for storage, and the northern one as the women's room. It is the western part of the house that is usually raised when an upper storey is required.

In towns and in villages, new types of houses are being built, where it is impossible to find any trace of the old plans. But the same word, however, is being used for the kitchen. The newer houses are more ventilated, have greater ceiling height and are, as a rule, more artistically conceived, than the old type of houses.

The huts of the poorest have only two rooms, one the kitchen and the other the sitting and sleeping room. There is, however, no house that has no verandah in front of it.

Rich people have wells near the kitchen, so that the women can draw water standing in the kitchen. Every one of the larger houses has a bathing tank in a corner of the compound, so that the women can bathe without being seen. The poor do not generally have wells near by, but have to go some distance to get water ; so also, they have to bathe in tanks where they are exposed to the gaze of the passers-by and the multitudes of men and women who bathe. (Such a tank in a field on the roadside, where men and animals have their ablutions, can be seen in plate i, fig. 1).

The furniture in all Irava houses, except those of the educated and rich urban people is extremely scanty. Their plates, spouted waterpots, spittoons, and lime pots are all made of bell-metal in most houses. The richer people have larger bell-metal or copper vessels for large scale cooking (plate vi, fig. 3) on festive occasions, brass and copper waterpots, and brass standing lamps and hanging lamps with chains. The boxes for keeping betel leaves are very often nice looking with their heavy brass hinges and paintings. Only moderately rich people have cots for all the family, the vast majority of people sleeping on pandanus mats spread on the floor. Earthernware cooking vessels, coconut-shell ladles, basketry strainers for boiled rice, wooden mortars and pestles, basketry winnows, iron coconut-scrapers, earthenware and bell-metal dishes, etc., used to be the only kitchen articles. To these have to be added new imported glasses, cups and saucers and plates of porcelain, hurricane lanterns, etc.

The task of describing the domestic life of a people who are undergoing vast changes is by no means easy. At one extreme there are a few officials and businessmen in urban areas, who are somewhat Europeanised, and have tables and chairs, dining rooms, bed-rooms, European dress for outdoor purposes, and have introduced tea and coffee into their dietary and talk a mixture of English and Malayalam among themselves. Their women are better

dressed in *saris*, are fully covered (cf. plate xi), and remain indoors without going out alone. Such urban communities set the standard of life for people in the village[1] where some of the educated men initiate changes on the same pattern. But the vast majority of houses are simply furnished in the manner described above, a few printed books and coloured pictures of Hindu gods being the only obvious influence of Europeanism. So our starting point will be the simple rural family, as a type of which we shall have one from Cochin State, in which there are the father and mother, one married son and his two children, and two unmarried sons. The son's wife is his own mother's brother's daughter. The three brothers have an only sister who is married, but since her husband is away in Calicut, she spends most of her days at the father's house. Very early in the morning the daughter-in-law is up and feeds the oxen, which are to be yoked to the water-lifts for irrigating the garden of areca palms. One is awakened at dawn by the creaking of the water-lifts. For places where the "ox lifts" cannot be used, *picotas* (plate ii, fig. 2), lowered and lifted by pairs of men, are employed. The men sing and talk to the oxen as they go up and down. While one of the brothers is busy driving the oxen, the others direct the water through channels to the depression at the root of each of the palms. The father, meanwhile, has sharpened his knife, and is off with his apparatus to collect the palm wine from the bastard sago palms (plate ii, fig. 1) which he "taps". After feeding the cattle, the daughter-in-law is busy sweeping the yards all round the house, which she sprinkles with cowdung mixed in water. Then she proceeds to clean the cow-shed. The daughter rolls up the mats, sweeps the inside of the house, and then proceeds to clean the cooking and eating vessels. The mother who was busy seeing the father off after giving him betel-nut to chew, cuts some bananas to be cooked as relish to be taken with the morning's rice gruel. The daughter places a pot of water on the fireplace, makes fire under it, and thrusts pieces of firewood in. The older of the two grandchildren is now up and goes and urinates near the edge of the yard. The grandmother places properly the red strip of cotton cloth which forms the perineal covering of the little girl, and says "My daughter, go into the 'compound'[2], that is the first thing you should do in the morning". So off she goes followed by a dog. By 8 a.m. the first meal of ricegruel and a snack of banana boiled and seasoned with coconut oil in which mustard seeds have been fried, are ready. The men who return from their work are served first, in bell metal plates. They sit on the inner verandah or the outer verandah on wooden planks or mats, and eat the gruel with leaf spoons and the relish with their fingers. The little girl sits opposite her grandfather and clumsily eats the gruel from

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[1] About 40 years ago tea was unknown in most villages. When a village headman, returning from Calicut town, brought with him some tea, the news that he had got some strange beverage brought many friends to his house. The village headman's son, who was then a boy, tells me that his father proudly ordered for glasses of tea with goat's milk to be given to be tasted by the wondering visitors.

[2] As there are no latrines, defaecation is done in distant corners of the gardens. As vegetation is dense there is sufficient privacy. Dogs and domestic fowls do part of the scavenging. In the crowded coastal area it is becoming an increasingly difficult problem, and the health departments are just trying to introduce bore-hole latrines.

the same dish. The men do not generally sit together for their meals, except on festive occasions; the younger fellows may sit in the kitchen and eat, though it is the women's place. It is only when their morning tasks are over that the women get time to clean their teeth and scrape their tongue. Then they eat the gruel served by the mother, who also now spits out the cud of betel, cleans her mouth and has her breakfast.

The sons go again and continue their work till 10-30 or 11 a.m. The father finishes his work earlier and the sweet toddy is left in charge of his wife to be evaporated to make *jaggery* (crude sugar) (see plate vi, fig. 2); the palmwine he takes to the licensed shop to be sold to the contractor. While the mother is busy making sugar, the daughter and daughter-in-law and a woman labourer who has now come in husk a quantity of boiled and sun-dried paddy. Rice and relishes for the midday meal are being cooked at the same time, one or other of the women going and attending to it now and then. The sons have finished the heaviest part of the days work, and giving the oxen some straw to eat, go to the neighbouring pool to bathe. One of them, as he is free, may now take charge of the little babe and thus relieve the worried young mother. By noon, the father is back again and soon it is time for the midday meal. It is a heavier and more elaborate meal than the first. The little girl is fed by the grandmother, who makes boluses of the rice, puts the relish on them and put them into her month. The women eat after the men, giving the labourer also a small share of the food. After the meal the father and mother chew betel-nut sitting on the outer verandah, while the eldest son does so away from his father. The second son has not yet begun to chew betel-nut regularly—people postpone it till marriage according to the old practice still continuing in the villages—but he smokes a *beedi* (a kind of cigarette) on the sly; smoking in the presence of elders is regarded as being disrespectful to them. As it is very warm, the father has a nap on the veranda, but the others after short rest disperse again, one to graze the cattle, the other to attend to gardening, and the third to the bazaar to sell some cakes of jaggery and to buy fish, condiments, kerosene, coconut oil, etc. After his nap the father again prepares to go to work on his palms till dusk. The women have firewood chopped for preparing the evening meal, then grind condiments, bathe the children, get ready some hot water for the old father to bathe and then have their own daily bath in the pool. The evening bath is important in the narrow horizon of the women of the rural areas, because other women of the village also come there almost at the same hour and they can exchange news, listen to gossips, etc. These village tanks are semi-public places though they may in most cases belong to some private landholders, and the men and women of all group B castes go there. The women have, unlike men, fewer opportunities of meeting each other.

At dusk the daughter lights one of the old-fashioned brass lamps (kerosene lights are never used for lighting on ritual purposes) with coconut oil and cotton wick, and taking the lamp to the southern end of the verandah, shows it southwards, saying " Let me show

the lamp." The men who see the light bow to it. The light is shown thus to the family deities and the ancestral spirits. She lights a similar lamp in the little room wherein are the low stools representing "dead ancestors." The father after his bath smears himself with holy ashes (of cowdung sacred to the God Siva) and sitting face to the east "repeats the name of God." By 9 p.m. dinner is eaten. The father eats alone, the three brothers eat sitting by each other near the kitchen but outside it, and after they have finished, the women eat in the kitchen as before. The father after betel-chewing asks the youngest son to read him a few pages of the *Ramayana*, the sacred story of Rama. Among the sacred names he utters, that of the hero of the Ramayana is not the least important one. The sleeping rooms and the verandas are again swept clean for spreading the mats to sleep on. The old father and the eldest son alone have cots, the rest of the household sleeping on mats on the floor. Spittoons are placed near the cots—they are necessary in view of the quids of betel-nut that still remain half chewed.

During busy seasons such as the harvest both men and women have longer days of work, but the general routine is that indicated above for independent farmers. Among the large numbers of day labourers, the number of meals is usually two, the solid rice meal at midday being dropped or replaced by rice gruel. In urban families the morning rice gruel is preceded by coffee or the rice gruel may be replaced by a breakfast consisting steamed rice flour with scraped coconut and coffee. Urban women of the educated middle and upper classes do much less work than the corresponding classes of women in the rural areas. Men's and women's routine of work is dull and monotonous in the urban areas whereas in the rural areas every month sees some changes in the people's activities.

KINSHIP SENTIMENT IN THE FAMILY.

In the joint family we have described above, there are two pairs of married people of two different generations. By observing them, we not only see the kind of behaviour pattern between husband and wife, but also the manner in which time works changes in the marital relationship. The eldest son and his wife are cross-cousins and were married when he was nineteen and she, fifteen. They knew each other from infancy, and marriage has only strengthened the already existing bonds in a more intimate manner. Of course when unrelated people marry the trauma of separation is great and oppressive for the girl, and the cry of young brides when they are being taken away on the day of the marriage used to be an invariable accompaniment of Irava marriages[1]. When the cross-cousins became husband and wife, the wife could no longer call him "brother" as she used to do; nor was she or her husband to address each other by using personal names. Expressions meaning "there", "who is there," "look" were the only means of attracting each other's attention. The young wife, when she refers to her husband uses "they" (honorific plural). Her

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[1] It is becoming rare now for brides to cry, as they are nowadays usually older.

friends make this difficulty of hers the subject of jokes; they pretend not to understand her and ask "Whom do you mean by 'they'?" She then smiles, and says, "I mean so-and-so's brother," naming her sister-in-law or small brother-in-law. The circumlocution becomes easier when she becomes a mother, for she then uses the expression "father of my child" for her husband. The husband is also in a similar situation as his wife. To address the wife by her personal name, full or abbreviated, is a modern change, looked on with 'shame' and disapproval by most old fashioned men, though some old people used to do so to the amusement of their neighbours. No familiarity between husband and wife is noticed outside their home. When they have to go together, they keep at a distance from each other, so long as they are passing through places where they are well known. When they visit the wives' parents, then the husband and wife behave more freely towards each other than in his own house, where no conversation, except on business is usually carried on between husband and wife, especially in the presence of the father. Cross-cousins of the opposite sex are more free and need be less reserved in public than husband and wife. The wife works for all the members of the house, and is free with the husband's younger brothers if they are younger than herself, and more formally respectful to her parents-in-law than their own daughters are. In the earlier stages of married life, it is only their sexual intercourse that brings a husband and wife together. Pregnancy then brings about changes; the young husband grows more solicitous about the wife. For the first delivery the wife is taken to her own parental home in seventh month of pregnancy, and the young husband often tries to see her and inquire after her health. An unsympathetic mother-in-law is reported to have asked her son, "Why do you make such a pother? Do you think she carries a lump of gold in her abdomen?"

Quarrels between husband and wife are rather rare in the earlier years of married life, but on the other hand, they are drawn into the petty quarrels between their parental groups. Two "houses" newly related by marriage are always on edge, ready to pick holes. The husband's mother may feel that she was not sufficiently honoured or that the customary gift of sweets from the daughter-in-law's "house" was meagre in quantity. The quarrels may be more serious if the dowry was not paid at the stipulated time. The mother-in-law may taunt the daughter-in-law saying, "Your people have not given you a bell metal plate to drink rice gruel from. The one you are drinking from is mine." The young husband under the tutelage of his parents may even be ordered to take his wife back to her parents and leave her there.

Adultery and unchastity were extremely rare, when early marriage and the joint family system afforded little opportunities for illicit intercourse. Conversely, with the growing freedom for men and women, they are increasing in the urban areas, especially among the educated people, sexual delinquencies among whom are also more talked about. I know

of only one instance where a rural husband suspected his wife of adultery and divorced her after making her confess it. She was a tall fair woman, and he was shrewd, experienced and practical. When after the marriage he with his wife were at her parental " house " on their third honeymoon visit, he saw a Pana youth behaving very familiarly with his wife and mother-in-law. He did not like it and asked his wife why he was allowed to be prowling about. She explained that he was a poor fellow, very much attached to the family. When returning home that day to attend to his work, he heard someone loudly remarking about a Pana youth. This strengthened his suspicion. Returning in the evening he determined to explore the case carefully. When everyone in the house was asleep, he lighted a lamp and taking out his big sharp knife from under the pillow, held it at his wife's throat, and threatened to murder her. She confessed that she had had sexual intercourse once with the Pana youth. He left the house immediately, without making any more fuss, and married again.

Another instance of adultery had more serious consequences. A poor Irava, his wife and three children of whom he was very fond, and his wife's mother lived very happily in a village in Walluvanad taluk (Malabar district). The wife was working as an out-door servant in a neighbouring Nayar household and according to reports a young man of the latter household was having a liaison with her. Some friends of his, who heard the village gossip, hinted to him about it, but he would not believe them. When he finally confirmed his suspicions, he inflicted a dozen wounds on her and her mother, and taking his three children went to the police station and told them the story. He was sentenced to a term of rigorous imprisonment. His faithless wife did not die, and in defiance of public opinion is now leading a bad life.

The position of an unfaithful husband is not so precarious. The wife may quarrel, but if she pesters him too much he has the whip-hand over her. I know the widow of a very immoral man, retaining none but affectionate feelings for him. Women have been taught to regard men as " free " people.

Every man jealously guards the honour of his wife and sisters. Such a great price is set upon women's chastity that the family prestige goes up or down with it. Even a small younger brother may command his elder sister to " go in ", if he found her talking with a stranger. In a recent case, a man in his attempt to make advances to his neighbour's wife, touched her hand, and the husband hacked off the offending arm. In quarrels, the real or imaginary sexual delinquencies of ancestresses are hurled at the face of the rivals. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the older folk of a " house ", and especially of the men, to see that neighbours get not the slightest excuse to build theories or make charges against them. To go to jail for stealing is not considered as great a shame as having a mother or sister who is known to be immoral. " *Mānam* " (honour) figures largely in sex matters.

When the relationship between the husband and wife has been firmly established and they are middle-aged and in full charge of their household, their mutual behaviour becomes closer and more intimate. We saw in an earlier paragraph, that the elderly couple sit and chat and chew betel leaves even when others are present. The wife scrubs her husband's back when he bathes, which like lousing is an index of domesticity. A young wife does not perform these services for her husband, and if she is asked to, she feels " shame ". When a young man is ill, his mother usually attends on him, not his wife. It is only when the mother is no longer present to take care of her son, to feed and nurse him, that the wife has other functions than the biological ones in regard to her husband.

" Betel-leaf by the hand of the wife,
Food by the hand of the mother ".

The above saying is a native formulation about the relative position of the mother and wife. Betel-leaves symbolise love, and they taste best when given by the wife, but food given by the mother is the best. There is a strict correlation between the amount of freedom enjoyed by a woman and the appreciation of her importance in the household. When she is merely the sexual partner of a junior member of a household and an additional worker, she is hedged by prohibitions, but when she developes into the mistress of the house, she is freer, and virtually though not legally an equal partner.

In urban areas what may be termed simple or individual families are being established, with very young and inexperienced mistresses. It is recognized by the educated young men who are employed in towns, that it is best to have an elderly woman relative, preferably the mother, if she can leave the village home and stay in the town with them. " It is not safe to leave young girls alone ", say the wise old men. The " modern " wife has no period of apprenticeship to serve, but takes charge of her work and her husband immediately after marriage. She is happy and free, compared to the old fashioned daughter-in-law. She has only one master to please, namely, her own husband. From this arises the craze of many parents to give their daughters in marriage to petty officials, in order to insure them an escape from the long period of nonage in a rural joint family. But summarising evidence from a number of these urban individual families, the supposed gains are flimsy, when weighed against the advantages of the troublesome tutelage, with its hard work, incessant learning and the slow growth of responsibility. The change, however is inevitable, and the town type of families are on the increase.

According to old linguistic usages there is no Malayalam term used by the common folk for " husband " or " wife ", " my Irava ", " my Tiya " or " my Chovan ", etc., being used by women, and the corresponding feminine forms used by the men. They are more or less equivalent to " my man " and " my woman ". Descriptive terms as " he (or she) whom I have married ", " folk in the house ", " father (or mother) of my children " are also in common use. Sanskrit derivatives, " ***bhartāvu*** " (one who governs) fo " husband ",

and "*bhārya*" (the governed) for "wife" are used by the more pedantic, and English educated people use the English "wife" or "Mrs." with the Malayalam word for "my" prefixed to it. Interesting features of the linguistic changes in the sphere of family life are the growing unpopularity of terms, smacking of caste and the substitution of Aryan terms, the dropping of terms, such as *eti*[1], that denoted the inferior position of the wife, and using instead the personal name of the wife in addressing her.[2] These along with other evidences to be adduced later, are indications of the improved status of women in the family.

Children are the gift of God. The strongest argument that is advanced against artificial birth-control is somewhat like this. "Look at so-and-so and his wife (a barren woman). They have been trying their best, praying and making offerings for offspring, but they have failed. Children are not born through human efforts ; no artificial method can stop their being born". It is only when honour and prestige are in danger, as in a case of pre-marital pregnancy, that abortion is thought of.

Safe delivery is ensured by various ceremonies, such as the uncle breaking the coconut, and if there is delay, by the women jumping across the door-stop several times, invoking the aid of the god, Sasta, the guardian of growing and pregnant women.

Sons are more desired for than daughters, because the latter are a drain on the resources of the family, while the former are an asset. This was more generally so when girls were not given education and were not in the habit of seeking jobs. But now since this situation is slightly changed, and there are more opportunities of employment for women, the feeling against girl babes is growing less. A man who has only girls and no boys is pitied and he deplores his fate. This does not mean that girls are altogether unwanted. Several mothers after having three or four boys yearn for a daughter, as boys, as a rule, are of little assistance to them. A young woman who has several brothers is considered very lucky. "The little sister of seven brothers" is a favourite heroine of many folk tales.

The welcome that awaits a new-born son is great. Loud noise is made either by firing a mortar of gun powder or by beating on the ground with something heavy or simply hallooing. In some places the midwife (of the Malayan caste in N. Malabar) gives "gold-water"[3] to the baby. The invocation that accompanies it runs thus :

> May you prosper, live long days.
> May you live to the full term of food granted you.
> May you flourish like the banian tree, like the *pala* tree.
> This is the "gold-water" of the Lord of the East.[4]

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[1] *See* footnote on p. *Eti* is the feminine form of *eta*.

[2] A few married women of the Europeanised minority use the abbreviated personal names of the husband, but it has not become anything like a general habit.

[3] Water that has come in contact with gold.

[4] The Sun.

Do not give reason for anyone to abuse the mother who gave birth to you.
Do not give reason for anyone to abuse the father who caused you to be born.
Do not give reason for anyone to abuse the midwife who took you.
But if anyone abuses you, abuse them more.

The happiest person on the birth of a son is his mother, for, especially among the patrilineal Iravas, he is her permanent link with the husband's " house " and property. She and her husband now have someone who will " give them water when they are on their deathbed " ; who will call them " my father," " my mother " ; who will " give them rice-gruel when they are old." A son is an investment, a provision against old age, and even after their death, he continues to offer to their spirits on festive days the delicacies they used to like while living.

The young father in the midst of his sympathy with the suffering of his wife whom he sees a changed person, is first apprised of his changed status by being chaffed by the young friendly neighbours who come to see the babe. " It is exactly like its father," says one. " No, I think it is taking after its mother's brother." Again by others he is reminded, " You have a child. You have to be up and doing." Some old women, relatives of the father, may make fun of him by saying, " So-and-so never used to like children, but now that he has one himself, he is never tired of carrying it."[1] All these traditional trite-looking comments are full of meaning to the father, and his sentiments that had been growing about the young one are crystallised in the baby words that he now learns to use with facility. " I did not know these words, and when I used to hear others using them I thought it odd. Now they come naturally," he would say.

The baby, knowing old woman explain, sometimes learns to say " cha " for " *achhan* " (father) before it is able to say " ma " for " *amma* " (mother) ; that it feels the absence of the father and pines for him ; and that unless the father is there to bring up the child, its development will be incomplete.

The bond between parents and children is sacred ; a father or mother swears by " my son so-and-so," and the children do so by " my father's or mother's feet," which is as emphatic as swearing by the various gods. The fact that matrilineal people do not replace " father " in the above expression by " uncle (m.b.) " is worth noting.

The baby begins to be fed with starch food from the 28th day in most cases, and from the sixth month in other cases, with the staple food rice. Mother's milk continues to be given till another baby is born, though efforts may be made earlier at weaning it by applying bitter mixtures on the breasts. The modern tendency, however, is against hyperlactation, to prevent the mother's breasts from losing their form prematurely and to prevent her from growing weaker. The feeding bottle is therefore slowly making its appearance among the

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[1] A Malayalam proverb relevant in this connection runs thus : " A crow considers its young one as golden."

urbanised people. The less sophisticated villagers do not quite appreciate why healthy mothers should have recourse to artificial feeding when the natural food supply has not failed. Hyperlactation, once universal in India, is thus on the wane. Whether with this, the intensity of the Oedipus complex is also diminishing, will be an interesting problem for the psychoanalysts to investigate.

The surprising rapidity with which young boys assume a position of superiority over their sisters is of great interest in the study of the problem of sex inequality in Indian society. The maleness of the boy is emphasized at the expense of the little girls in the family. In any quarrel, the parents or relatives say to the little girl, " He is a boy, you are only a girl." When only five or six years old, boys begin to behave as it is proper for their sex. They are driven away from the kitchen with the warning, " This is not the place for you. Go and be on the front verandah." When they try to eat coconut scrapings from the grinding stone, they are warned " If you do so, your beard will not grow." While the activities of boys expand outside the home, as they grow older, those of the girls contract and recede more and more within the house, till with the onset of puberty, even the father ceases to be free with his daughters ; they seldom remain in his presence.

A grown-up son shows more formal respect to his father than to the mother. He does not sit in his father's seat or in his presence. Even the wooden sandals which a father uses are regarded with respect ; if he trod on them by accident, he would touch them respectfully and with the same finger touch his forehead, as a mark of atonement. His requests to his father are most often made through the mother. This kind of constraint does not develop between the mother and son, but as the son grows to manhood, she begins to treat him as deferentially as she treats her husband for " when your sons are no longer boys, you have to fear them."

After puberty girls become a great source of anxiety to the parents, especially the mother. If she goes out and is late in returning she says, " I have to get back home. I have my mature daughters at home. I have none to be in charge of them." These girls have to be chaperoned whenever they go out. If they are not married by the age of sixteen or eighteen, the mother grows worried, and would say, " My daughter with ' head and breast come ' (fully developed), remains at home. We are not like the Brahmans who can go and invite someone to marry their daughters. In our case ' the bucket must go to the well, not the well to the bucket ' ".[1]

It is almost a truism in modern anthropological theories of culture that the basic aspects of culture nearest to the biological nature of man, *viz.*, marriage and family, are more stable than others remote from it and have risen in response to secondary needs. The relationship between husband and wife and parents and children have among the Iravas been

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[1] The well stands for the girl (the passive partner) and the bucket for the bridegroom.

least affected by the vast changes that are taking place among them; far from weakening kinship ties within the individual family, the changing culture is strengthening them by throwing the full responsibility for the well-being of the children on the parents, instead of the joint family.

We have seen how the brothers become the protectors and guardians of their sisters very early in life, the eldest brother, then, being a kind of lieutenant or second in command to the father; in this manner a regular gradation is made in authority, based on age and sex. There is little of joking among them, the foolery or pranks of the youngest of the brothers being perhaps the only occasion for laughter. Any talk on sex is carefully avoided between the brothers or between the brothers and sisters. If the older daughters and the mother were discussing some village scandals, and a young sister happened to listen, she is asked to go and mind her own business. Young men indulging in conversation, avoid making even distant references to their unmarried sisters. Brother-sister incest is unheard of; I have only once heard of it being referred to in a quarrel between two Iravas, and then the reference was to a suspected liaison between the man and a classificatory sister.

There is less of constraint between brother and sister after the latter is married, and his authority over her is transferred to the husband. Till the sister's children become adults, the mother's brother's interest in them is second only to the father's and far greater than that of the brothers of the father.

MARRIAGE.

When a boy is about seventeen or eighteen years old, his father and mother begin to interest themselves in his marriage. The mother's brother is one to the first relatives to be consulted and requested to give suggestions and to look for possible brides. These relatives usually have their eyes open during visits to friends and relatives, or they may have been watching a suitable young girl grow up. There are two choices, marrying within a known circle of relatives, or marrying from a strange family. The advantages of the former are that existing personal ties of friendship and kinship will be strengthened, and there is no uncertainty about the character, compatibility and respectability of the family going to be linked by marriage. But there are disadvantages too, for example, in the event of any quarrels, not only the new, but also the old ties may be snapped or jeopardised. Anyway marriages within kinship circles are commoner than marriages with strangers,[1] which occur mostly among educated people, who move away from their homes, have opportunities to become friendly with families of strangers, and succeed in inducing the latter to overcome their reluctance " to give a girl to distant places ". Of marriageable kin, the nearest and the dearest are the family of the mother's brother. From this position we are led to a consideration of cross-cousin marriage.

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[1] " Even among serpents an old one is better." Proverb.

Cross-cousin marriage among the Iravas is not an enjoined but only a preferred form of marriage. The ease with which such a marriage can be arranged is the remarkable feature about it. The Malayalam proverb[1] puts the idea this way: "To perform the '*nira*' ceremony[2] on the first Sunday after the new moon, and to marry one's mother's brother's daughter, no one need be asked"; for they are such natural things. Cross-cousin marriages involve only simpler formalities, mean less strain, and as we have seen, from the girl's point of view they have the advantage of minimising the mother-in-law's tyranny. Among the matrilineal people the mother's brother uses his influence on his heir (the sister's son) to make him marry his daughter, thereby to reduce the possibility of clashes in the family. Marrying the father's sister's daughter is less common, because no such economic motive operates in its direction.

If the table of kinship terms below (p.), which is the type for Iravas of the central area, is examined, it is seen that the absence of any economic weightage in favour of either the mother's brother's daughter, or father's sister's daughter makes the chart symmetrical. If the table were to be adapted for the matrilineal section, the father's sister and the father's sister's daughter will have to be ignored.

In a paper read before the Sociology Section of the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological sciences, I have attempted to show how matriliny and cross-cousin marriage in Malabar have nothing to do with an early dual organization of society. There is an appearance of symmetry in the relationship terms for mother's brother and father's sister's husband among the patrilineal Iravas, but this symmetry is only verbal, since functionally the mother's brother is everywhere the most important relative. The same relationship terms are not invariably applied among the Iravas for the father-in-law and the mother's brother or father's sister's husband for we see such terms as "father", "mother", "uncle-father", "aunt-mother" being applied to the parents-in-law. These terms are in accord with the sociological differences involved in marriage within and outside kin.

Rivers refers to the mock conflict in the marriage ceremonies of Malabar[3] as "the result of the prior claim of the cross-cousin to the hand of the woman" (History of Malanesian Society, ii, 64–65). What is regarded as a conflict consists merely in the mother's brother's son stepping in front of the marriage party and his being given a small sum of money (one *panam*, about six pence). Many other relatives are given gifts or compensations for their services to the bride and to the bridegroom from their childhood, *e.g.*, their teachers, mothers, sisters and so on. The matrilineal people inlcude among them the mother's brother's son, who is an important relative. His action does not amount to a conflict. If Rivers' theory is to be maintained, there ought to be the "conflict" everywhere, both in the patrilineal and the matrilineal areas, but the fact that the mother's brother's son is important in

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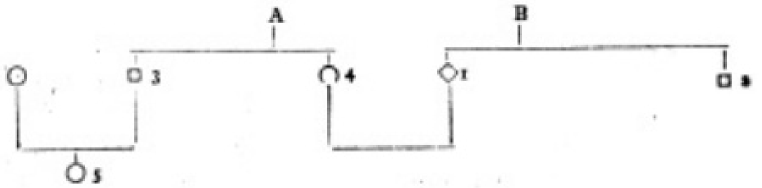
[1] More prevalent among the matrilineal people.

[2] *See* p. .

[3] Only in N. Malabar.

the marriage ceremonies of the matrilineal area, far from supporting the sequence of dual organization, enjoined cross-cousin marriage, etc., strengthens the belief expressed by me previously, that primarily economic considerations, and secondarily the bonds of kinship with one's affinal relatives have been at the back of cousin marriage among the Iravas.

In discussing the broader aspects of kinship we saw rules of exogamy that prohibit marriage between certain relatives on the father's side and certain others on the mother's side. In addition to these prohibitions, there is another rule prescribing that a person should marry from within his own kinship grade. An illustration from a recent instance of the violation of this rule will make this clear.



TEXT FIG. 3.

Two patrilineal families A and B are linked by the marriage of the elder brother (1) with the younger sister (4) of (3). The man (3) has a daughter (5). As (1) is her father's sister's husband, his brother (2) has also the status of an uncle to her. But (2) is " modern ", educated, and had little regard for old rules. He was fascinated by the girl (5), who, though of nearly equal age, was according to the kinship already existing between them, to be regarded as his niece (*marumakal*), removed by a generation from him. " You are her uncle," argued the elderly men and women, " how can you marry her ? ". The complications that would result from such a marriage can be easily imagined. Woman (4) who is the father's sister of (5), will after her marriage with (2) become her sister-in-law (*ēṭṭatti*), her present uncle (1), her elder brother (*ēṭṭan*), and so on. As this case history is interesting to us from the point of view of culture change, we shall continue the story. The father of the girl (5) was at first opposed to the suggested marriage, but since the young man persisted in his attempts to claim her, the father left the choice to her. She gave the verdict in favour of marrying him. Since the marriage involved only the violation of a minor caste rule—marriage rules differ in their stringency of application—it was celebrated, and I understand that the young couple are happy. This rule we might call the rule of " generation endogamy within kinship groups " the sanction for which is automatic, namely, confusion within the kinship group as regards the terms of address.

When a proper girl has been found, and her relatives have been informally sounded by a " middle man ", who is known as " the third man ", the preliminaries of the marriage negotiations begin. Many of the preliminaries that we are going to describe here are unnecessary in cross-cousin marriage, in which after the arrangement is settled they proceed directly

to the marriage. Throughout the long series of ceremonies, the boy and the girl for whom all these troubles are taken are in the background. The boy feels shy when his future wife's relatives come to " inspect " him and his home, and tries to avoid them, but is ordered to show himself out. He may tell his mother, " I do not want to marry ", but the usual taunt is, " We are going to bring the girl here, because I am tired of doing all the work myself." Someone who has already seen the girl may describe her in his presence to enjoy his shamefaced confusion. He is not consulted, not even told that he is going to be married. The entire responsibility for the future is shouldered by the parents and the relatives. According to a native formulation, the parents of the girl are anxious that the bridegroom must be rich, but the relatives are keen on his " house " being respectable, and the girl herself is anxious (mutely) that he should be good-looking.

" Seeing the house " is the first formality in the negotiations. On an appointed day, the girl's father, uncle and two or three other friends and relatives pay a formal visit to see the boy in particular and the house and the surroundings in general. If they are not favourably impressed they may return without eating any food ; if pleased, they stay to eat. Then they invite the boy's party to visit them and receive the girl's horoscope for examination by an astrologer, who has to pronounce his opinion as to whether the two heroscopes match. Before the feast, the horoscope written on several palm leaves, is placed on a banana leaf in front of a lighted brass lamp. The maternal uncles of the boy and girl stand side by side, the girl's uncle hands over the horoscope to the other, each of them formally asking the permission of those assembled to give and to receive the horoscope.

The examination of the horoscope is important, because boys and girls born under the influence of particular stars may bring ruin to each other by their incompatibility. If the astrologer's report is favourable, the next ceremonial occasion is " fixing the auspicious time " for the marriage ceremony, followed by a very grand feast in which chicken and ash-cucumber are essential items. The amount to be given as " earnest money " (*achchāram*) by the boy's party is settled first. The minimum paid by the poorest is 8 *panams*, but according to the means of the particular person, it could be 12, 21, or 29. These amounts are insignificant now, but at the time when they were fixed must have meant more, as money was then very scarce. In North Malabar this earnest money is called " *kāṇam* ", which is used in the terminology of land tenure for the amount advanced by a cultivator to the landlord as an interest-bearing premium, to be returned when the property is surrendered on demand after the end of the stipulated period, which is usually twelve years. Anticipating the details that follow, it may be stated here that Iravan marriage is in theory a temporary depositing of a girl by her natural guardian amidst another group from whom a security is received and also an undertaking to take care of her. But in practice she becomes one of the husband's household, and when she has her sons she becomes firmly established in their ramage. Here, however, we observe that theoretically there is no difference in their position in their husband's household between women of patrilineal Iravas on the one hand and matrilineal Iravas on

the other. Marriage thus is a legal contract (of course without the modern formalities in the registry office) entered into between two kinship groups on behalf of the boy and girl for their mutual benefit and the fulfilment of their proper functions as man and woman. The ritual tie is created only between the two, the boy and the girl, but through them it ramifies far and wide through their kinship. In all the ceremonies, the father's group, the mother's group and the villagers are represented, and at every stage the formal permission of all is asked for and given.

As business-like men, the boy's party get in advance an idea of the amount of dowry that the girl will be given and also whether it will be given at the time of the marriage itself or will be postponed. The dowry consists of gold and silver ornaments, plates, spouted pots, spittoons, lamps, etc., of brass, and in the case of richer people, cows, buffaloes, copper vessels, servant maid and boy. About half a century ago, slaves were also given as part of the dowry. Apart from these, it was customary for the relatives of the girl to present her ornaments. Among the patrilineal Iravas the payment of the stipulated dowry is insisted upon, since the girl has no right of inheriting her paternal property.

For the actual marriage, the bridegroom usually goes with the party to the bride's house, but in Southern Travancore and in some parts of the central area, he does not go, but his villagers, uncle and *inangan*, with his sister form the party, and the sister is the person who is said to bring him his bride. This marriage without the bridegroom going to the bride's house is nowadays regarded as strange, but it strengthens the opinion put forward above, on the great degree of socialisation of marriage.

The bridegroom used to be dressed in military style about 60 or 70 years ago and used to be accompanied by two bond friends. Nowadays the sword is no longer permitted under the Arms Act to be carried and the long caps, waist bands, necklaces and armlets are considered "primitive" and summarily rejected in favour of a shirt and a shawl. A servant carries the clothes for the bride and her mother. On reaching the bride's house, the bridegroom and party are received by the bride's mother, who throws grains of rice on him. The bridal clothes and the earnest money are then formally given by the groom's uncle to the girl's uncle, a learned man singing a verse, which is the Iravan marriage formula :

> "Before this gathering of our caste-men and with the lamp as witness, the girl of this house is given to the Irava of . . . house. You are to love her and look after her carefully ; you can punish her reasonably, can beat her gently, but not with a stick so as to leave scars or marks on her body ; you should not cut her hair, ear, tongue or limbs ; do not put her to the necessity of taking oaths in front of temples. Keep her well, but if you are displeased with her bring her back to us even if she has ten children, and we shall have her back, after settling the accounts in the presence of the "third man"[1] and the *inangan*."

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[1] If "the third man" is not alive, his son or heir can represent him. The "third man" used to be called *naduvan* (middle man) in Travancore.

Wearing the new clothes the bride is now brought into the ***pandal*** (shed on the yard), and seated by the side of the bridegroom. Then at the auspicious moment, the bridegroom's mother and their other relatives, and last of all the ***inangan*** and his wife, put morsels of porridge into the groom's mouth and then into the bride's mouth ; then from a spouted pot a few drops of a sweet drink of coconut milk are poured into their mouths (plate iii, fig. 2). After this ritual feeding, grains of rice are sprinkled on the two who have thus been united by " the milk tie."

Just before leaving, the bridegroom presents his mother-in-law with a new loin cloth and she in her turn presents him with a bell-metel plate, after receiving which he respectfully salutes her by touching her feet with his fingers.

A short while after seeing off the bride and bridegroom to the latter's house, the mother-in-law and a party of 15 men follow them for the ceremony of " seeing the door " *i.e.*, have a look at her daughter in her new home. The bridegroom's mother presents her two panams now.[1]

In North Malabar the ceremony of milk giving is dropped ; there, there is only the blessing of the couple by throwing rice on their heads. In Travancore, marriages used to be at night, the torch light processions being grander.

After the marriage the bride and bridegroom are entertained by the near relatives of the former. It is really the period of " fattening " for them. A week used to be the minimum period to stay at a stretch, but it is being much curtailed nowadays. It is during these early entertainments that the young man gets to know his wife's relatives. For a short period he is the centre of attraction, for many people come to see him. His brothers-in-law remain with him always, showing him the things in the village and amusing him. This is the beginning of the most intimate friendship that usually exists between brothers-in-law. After every period of entertainment the young couple have to be escorted back to the groom's house.

The sociology of the brother-in-law relationship has already been dealt with by me in detail in a previous publication (Madras museum Bulletin, vol. ii, 4). Here it may be pointed out how under conditions of culture change, this relationship tends to grow closer than before. In the event of a man's death, the joint family, when it was intact, undertook the care of the orphaned children. It was a shame for the ramage to which the children were affiliated to allow them to be brought up by others. Now in the patrilineal area, the widow seeks protection with her brothers rather than remain with her late husband's brothers. Levirate, once common in this area, solved the difficulty in some cases, but it is going out of fashion.

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[1] According to a legend, an Irava in ancient times captured with the king's permission a Brahmin girl and made her his wife. The mother came to the Irava's house to have a look at her daughter, and then the Irava gave her some money. " Seeing the door " ceremony is in memory of this old incident. The Irava, therefore, finds here a relic of marriage by capture.

The son-in-law gives his parents-in-law all the respect that he usually gives his own parents, but he is freer with them. If he is not related to them as an own or classificatory nephew, he addresses them "father" and "mother" as his wife does; if he is related already, the old relationship terms continue to be used.

It used to be customary for the women of the bride's house to try to create laughter at the expense of the bridegroom. In serving him rice, they fill the plate so completely that he finds it difficult to eat without dropping some of the rice out, and the women watch his confusion and laugh. All this was done to make him feel familiar and at home.[1]

The new couple sleep together for the first time during the first of the series of entertainments. It is the duty of the mother-in-law to see that her daughter is taken, sometimes thrust, into the room where the son-in-law sleeps.

In modern marriages, especially among the educated section of the Iravas, the young men and women are as a rule much older, twenty to twenty-five being the common age. Marriages are still arranged by the parents, but the young men are allowed to see the girl whom they are going to marry. Sometimes they may even refuse to marry the girl selected by the parents. Girls express their preference or dislikes rarely, but instances are not wanting of their doing so. Formerly, mothers used to examine their prospective daughters-in-law as carefully as persons buying oxen in the cattle fairs. Now young men want to have personal interviews with the bride-elect, and the parents of either party allow them to do so, in order to clear themselves of the possible blame of having been responsible for a bad match. Men who are economically independent of their parents make their own selection. As a rule, young men are anxious to marry as soon as their economic conditions permit it, as sexual gratification is otherwise exceedingly precarious. The craving for marriage among young women is even greater for similar reasons. But the economic aspect of marriage is worsening, especially among the educated. A wife who was, in the joint family, an additional worker, is now more or less a "drone" in a modern household and becomes a great economic burden. So, while among the poor, early marriage, as it was in the old days, is the general rule, among the better classes the average age of marriage is going up.

The protracted preliminaries of marriage are abbreviated nowadays. The examination of the horoscope is not insisted upon. The business part of the marriage, especially the dowry, is left to the will of the bride's people. No earnest money is given. The feasts are less elaborate and expensive. The ritual part of the marriage has also changed. This will be discussed in a later chapter. The net result is that marriages are made cheaper, less elaborate and less socialized.

Whatever the form of marriage, it is not only the legalization of the sexual union of a man and a woman, but it is also the basis of a co-operative organization for the upbringing

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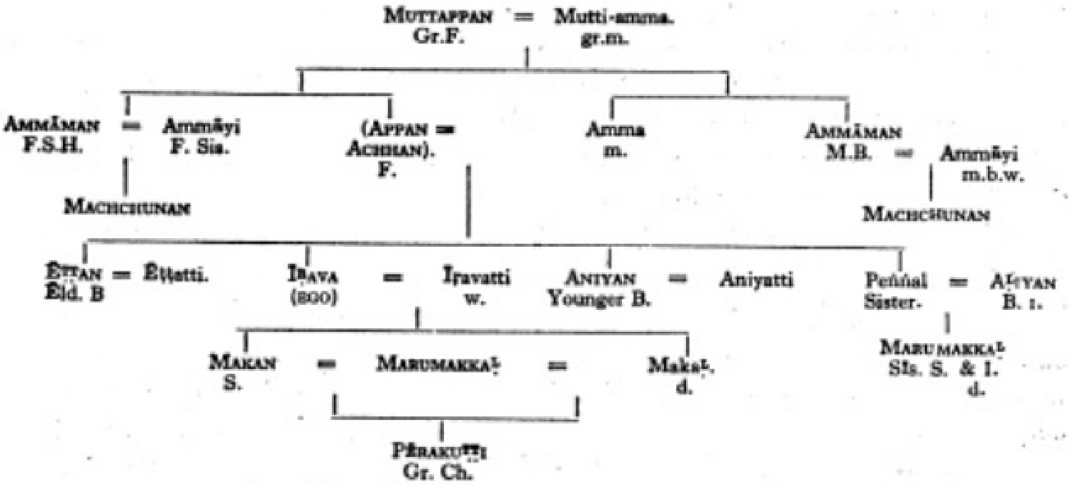
[1] This is no longer popular.

of a new generation. From the day of marriage, till children are born, and they in their turn become adults, these two kinship groups co-operate in their interests. There is no rite, no ceremony in which the mother's brother does not have an important share. For him the children mourn just as they do for their father.

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY AND CULTURE CHANGE.

Kinship terminology is usually believed to have great stability and on this supposition many theories have been built up. Indeed kinship terms have great tenacity of life, and perhaps it is true that they survive as relics of the past. But the data on Irava kinship terminology show that they are as susceptible to change as any other items of culture. In the table below is given a list of the more important relationship terms used by the Iravas of the patrilineal area.

SCHEMATIC LIST OF KINSHIP TERMS OF MALABAR.[1]



NOTE.—Terms for males, or females and males, in small capitals.
Terms for females only, in lower case.

Etiquette among the Iravas demands that relationship terms should be used when addressing or referring to fellow caste men. Educated persons get over this inconvenient form of politeness by prefixing " Mister " to the personal name of the man. But for those that still adhere to the old customs in this matter, every unrelated Irava known to them is either a brother or sister, or uncle or aunt. Listening to the conversation of the Iravas, any one not familiar with this system of etiquette may wonder at the number of brothers and uncles that each person has. Even a stranger of the caste may be heard addressed as *ammaman* (mother's brother), if he is old enough to be called so. In parts of central Malabar it is not unusual

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[1] After the type used by Dr. Raymond Firth in *We, the Tikopia*, p. 249.

for friends to call each other ***aliyan*** (wive's brother or sister's husband). The distinction between own and courtesy relatives is thus sociological, and not linguistic. The custom is always to suffix the relationship term to the person's name, except in the case of relatives like one's own parents and grand-parents. In verbal explanations of relationship, geographical and clan indices are used, which avoids most of the confusions. People also speak of " near ", " bent " or " crooked ", " new " or "old " relationships. In endearment or for showing special closeness the personal name may be dropped for the time being and the relationship term used by itself. Affection for a relative is reflected in the voice of the speaker, hence the usual expression, " a pot should be placed below when he addresses me." By this is meant that the term of relationship is so tenderly and affectionately uttered that to collect its sweetness a pot should be held below the lips of the speaker. In talking to their parents children seldom use " you ", but repeat the term for father or mother every time that " you " has to be used, *e.g.*, " Mother, what did mother say ? "

Dr. Raymond Firth observes that the " terms for address to gods too partake of a kinship character " among the Tikopians.* Ancestral spirits are referred to by the Iravas as ***Karanavanmar*** (heads of joint families) or as ***Muttappan*** (grand-father). Benevolent deities are addressed as the " mother " or the " father " of such and such a village. The god Vishnu of the famous temple of Guruvayur in the Ponnani Taluk of British Malabar is known as ***Guruvayurappan*** (*i.e.*, the Father at Guruvayur, Guruvayur being the name of the village where the temple is situated).

The first of the terms that we have to deal with is ***appan*** for father. This is an old Dravidian term meaning *genitor*, and is in use all over the Tamil and Canarese country also. But this term is rapidly being displaced by the Aryan term ***achhan*** which means " the noble one." The Dravidian words, ***aṇṇan*** and ***tampi*** for elder and younger brother respectively were replaced long ago by Aryan words ***ēṭṭan*** and ***aniyan*** (corrupt forms of ***jyeshṭhan*** and ***anuja***), and no one uses the old terms, which are still used by the Tamils who have been less Sanskritised than the people of Malabar. It is significant in this connection to note that the Namputiri Brahmans of Malabar, the introducers of Aryan language and culture into Malabar use the ancient Dravidian term ***appan*** for the father ; The Syrian Christians also stick to the term ***appan*** but use the term ***achhan*** for their priests and also for the mother's brother. Among the Iravas, the process of displacement of the old term for father is going on apace. The term for the father's elder brother or younger brother when translated means " big father " or " young father ". Here the old term for father is usually retained and has not been replaced by the new Aryan term. The motive for this change is to imitate the Nayars, the immediate superiors of the Iravas. In imitation they probably had not thought of the fact that their own original term is the one used by the highest caste, the Brahmans. This brings to light clearly the psychology of imitating not what is the best, but what is the nearest.

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* *We, the Tikopia*, p. 259.

The relationship term for " mother " has remained unchanged, and the same word ***amma*** is used in the same form throughout the Dravidian speaking countries. Children sometimes learn to call mothers by their personal names by imitating some elderly relative who does so. This causes amusement to the hearers and irritation to the mothers ; and the habit is dropped as soon as the child is old enough to understand its own peculiarity. This imitation of the relationship terms used by elders leads to several other errors. To give an example, a young boy used to call his father's sister's husband *aliyan* imitating his father, instead of calling him *ammāman*.

In the table of kinship terms it will be seen that the father's sister's husband and the mother's brother are both called *ammāman*, though we have seen that sociologically the latter is more important a relative than the former. In the matrilineal area, the father's sister's husband is a remote relative (as all the father's relatives are) than in the patrilineal area. So the matrilineal Iravas do not call the father's sister as *ammāyi*, nor her husband as *ammāman*, but as *mûttamma* or *ilayamma* (older mother or younger mother), and as *valiyappan* or *ilayappan* (big father or younger father), according as they are older or younger than the ego's father. In some parts the father's sister's husband is addressed as *ēṭṭan* (elder brother) and the father's sister as *ēṭṭatti*, by which terms even strangers are addressed. Similarly the children of the father's sister are not regarded as *machchunan*.

Cross-cousins do not use the relationship term of reference for address, but use the terms for brother and sister. Suppose ego marries his cross-cousin ; then his younger brothers cease to call her *pennal*, and use a new term *ettatti*, which means *ēṭṭan's* (elder brother's) wife ; ego's sister who used to call her *ettatti* (elder sister) before marriage calls her now as *nattun*. Brothers-in-law are mutually *aliyan* (both for reference and addressing). The terms *aliyan* and *nattun*, though they are terms of reference in the matrilineal areas, have ceased to be used as terms of address, as they smack of backwardness, and the Nayars who are the exemplars of the Iravas in this matter do not also use them now.

Parents-in-law are referred to as *ammaman* and *ammayi* if they are related already to the person before the marriage. Otherwise they are referred to in all Irava localities descriptively as the " old people " of such and such a " house " or village, or as the father of so-and-so. There are two compound terms, *ammaman-appan* and *ammayi-amma* (" uncle-father " and " aunt-mother ") for father-in-law and mother-in-law, the significance of which I have pointed out earlier. Even when this term of reference is used, the manner of addressing the parents-in-law is the same as that of addressing own parents. The more recent tendency is to drop using any relationship term of address, and use the descriptive expression for reference. In correspondence between educated fathers-in-law and sons-in-law (which is usually done in English) the salutation is " my dear father-in-law or son-in-law."

From this brief account it may safely be predicted that some relationship terms as *aliyan* will disappear from use among the Iravas in the course of a few decades to come, and words

like *ettan* will be used in more contexts than before, *e.g.*, for the brother-in-law. The word "Mister", the use of which is spreading to villages among people who know English will replace relationship terms used for etiquette to a very large extent.

FRATERNAL POLYANDRY.

The Iravas of Central Kerala, which includes the southern taluks of Malabar district and the northern taluks of Cochin State, practise fraternal polyandry. This curious institution has just been barely mentioned by several ethnographers and historians of Malabar. The non-fraternal polyandry of the Nayars, much less restricted in its distribution, has, however, received more than its share of attention and controversies have raged over it. None before me has, I think, investigated Irava polyandry by actually going amidst the people and observing its working at close quarters. Polyandry is rapidly disappearing and I may perhaps be the last ethnographer to be able to write about it.

Some of the early Mohammedan and European travellers in Malabar have left us their accounts of fraternal polyandry of the Iravas and Kammalas (artisans).

Sheikh Zeenuddin Mukhdom, an Arab traveller in Malabar, 1579-1580, after referring to the polyandry of the Nayars, gives us the following facts concerning the polyandry of the lower castes :—" The lower castes such as the carpenters, iron-smiths and others have fallen into the imitation of their superiors, the Nayars, with this difference, however, that the joint concern in a female is among these last limited to the brothers and male relatives by blood, to the end no alienation may take place in the course of the succession and right of inheritance." In his notes to this passage Duncan (Asiatic Researches, Vol. V, p. 14) adds " Five low castes Teer, Agaree (Carpenter), Muzalie (Brass-founder), Tattan (Goldsmith), Kollan (Blacksmith) who live promiscuously with one or more women ; and sometimes two, three or four or more brothers cohabit with one woman. The child or children who are the offspring of this connection inherit the property of this whole fraternity ; and whenever the female of the house is engaged with either of the brethren, his knife is said to be hung up at the door of the apartment as a signal of its being occupied. It is, however, justice to add that this custom is said to be local and practised in a few of the southern districts ; and even among the five castes there is no prohibition against any man's keeping for himself either one or as many women as he can maintain."

Barbosa, a European traveller, from whom we get the best account of Nayar polyandry, has the following remarks to make on the fraternal polyandry of the Iravas : " Sometimes among them two brothers have one wife and sleep with her and hold it nothing wonderful."

That there is no exaggeration at all in the accounts of both the Sheikh and Barbosa will be clear to all who have studied the castes referred to by them.

Legendary references to fraternal polyandry are very few. There is of course the well-known story of Droupadi, the daughter of the King of Panchala, marrying the five Pandava

brothers. It was the third brother Arjuna who actually won the bride in the shooting contest, but the eldest brother insisted on his right of sharing the wife, and their mother agreeing with him, it was settled that each of the five brothers was to have connubial rights for a period of one year in the order of seniority and, if any one interfered with the rights of another he was to go out and do penance and perform pilgrimages for a year. Opinion is divided as to whether the Pandava marriage reflects any real polyandrous state or trend of the society in the Epic days of India. The Brahmanas are, however, positively against fraternal or any other form of polyandry for it is said " One man can have many wives, but a woman cannot have co-husbands." (Aitareya Brahmana). Only one instance is known of a polyandrous marriage in the Buddhist Jatakas (birth stories). Princess Kanha was allowed to have at a time five husbands selected by her in a *svayamvara* assembly.

The tirade of Tippu Sultan (18th century), the ruler of Mysore, against the polyandrous Coorgs is of interest in this context. He told them, " If six brothers dwell together in a house and the elder brother marries, his wife becomes equally the wife of the other five, and intercourse so far from being disgraceful is familiarly considered a national rite. Not a man in the country knows his father and the ascendancy of women and the bastardy of your children is your common attribute."[1]

In marriage negotiations of the Iravas in the polyandrous area, it used to be common for the parents of a girl to feel reluctant to give her in marriage to less than two brothers, for in the event of the death of one, she would be looked after by the other. In a case known to me, two brothers had a common wife, but only the younger brother used to live with her, the elder being employed in Ceylon and able only to visit the wife once a year or so. On inquiry, it was found that this arrangement was a device of their relatives to strengthen the distant youth's attachment to his home. He could scarcely afford to take his wife to Ceylon, so the younger brother was in charge of her. I found the arrangement working quite satisfactorily.

In Travancore, where the Iravas have no polyandry, an attitude of mind in its favour comes occasionally to the ethnographer's notice when he goes deep into the sexual life of joint families. An illustration will make this statement clearer. In an Irava family of Quilon, there were two brothers, the elder of whom was only an uneducated farmer, but the younger was a graduate and a man of culture. The elder brother sought the hand of an educated girl in marriage, but she complained to her mother that she wanted to marry the younger and not the elder brother. An aunt of the young woman is reported to have chided her thus : " If you are clever, you can have him too, after marrying the elder brother." She did marry the elder brother, accepting the advice of her old relative.

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[1] Wilks, *Historical Sketches of Mysore*, 2nd Ed. (Madras 1869).

It may be safely said that the Iravas are only slowly emerging from the polyandrous tradition. In families that have given up polyandry and the brothers have each his own wife, the strength of old traditions leads to the loosening of monogamous ties. A and R were two brothers of a well-to-do family in the Walluvanad taluk of Malabar. A, the elder brother, was married, while R was single. Their aged mother also lived with them. A's wife was very beautiful and attached to him. But the younger brother was overcome by a desire to have sexual intercourse with her, and his mother who guessed his intentions secretly helped him in various ways. On some pretext or other she would order her to R's bedroom in order to give him a chance to talk to her. The old woman had herself lived under polyandous conditions and had scant respect for the new monogamy of her sons. For a year or so A's wife resisted her brother-in-law's advances telling him, " It is not proper, brother R." The young fellow grew bold with impatience and one day asked her bluntly to sleep with him, supporting his request with arguments that have great sociological significance. " Supposing my brother dies to-morrow," he said, " the burden of supporting you falls on my shoulders, and without asking for any one's permission, I can make you my wife. If that is possible, then why should you have any compunction to grant my request ? " These arguments convinced her and she planned successfully to sleep with R without her husband knowing it. R's confidant who narrated this story told me that when, later, R also got married, A used to sleep occasionally with that girl. It will be seen that common residence and the customs of levirate and sororate are contributory causes to the continuance of the polyandrous tendency within joint families where formal polyandry no longer exists.

Whether at a marriage all the brothers are made co-partners ceremonially, or whether there is only an understanding that though only one is married, the others should have access to the wife, there is no clear indication. The common practice is for the eldest brother alone to go to the bride's house to fetch her on the day of the marriage ; then at the ceremonies by which the " tie is created " by " drinking milk " all brothers are seated in a row on the right of the bride (plate iii, fig. 2) and all of them are given the sweet drink that makes them co-husbands of the woman. The youngest bridegroom in the photograph required some coaxing to take his seat by the bride. When questioned later why he behaved that way, he replied that he felt " shame " as several of his boy friends were present and would make fun of him. In an area where fraternal polyandry has disappeared, I once saw at an Irava marriage a small boy was placed at the milk-giving ceremony by the side of a grown-up elder brother of his who was the bridegroom ; the people had no intention whatever of making the little boy a partner in the marriage. A forgotten usage had a momentary, though unnecessary, resurrection in the minds of the elderly members of the marriage party.

For the honeymoon visits that follow the marriage, the eldest of the husbands goes to the bride's house and stays there for about a week with her. Then after a short interval it is the turn of the second brother to pay the honeymoon visit and be feted at the bride's house ;

and the remaining brothers follow suit in the strict order of seniority. Sometimes, to avoid the disturbance of their usual programme of work by one or other of the brothers absenting himself from home, all the three or four brothers go simultaneously for a week's honeymoon.

There seems to be very few rigid rules for the internal regulation of sexual life in a polyandrous Irava household. The knife which is placed on the door-frame to prohibit other husbands from entering, is no more heard of. Some simple turns are arranged by the mother when the bride is still young. When no one is sleeping with her the wife keeps the door of her bedroom open. As, nowadays, the number of brothers in a polyandrous marriage is usually two there is very little necessity for any eloborate regulation in their sexual life. Though, as it usually is the case, she likes one of her husbands better than the other, she takes care to conceal her likes and dislikes, lest it should lead to the break up of the tie between the brothers. K, an old woman of the once-important taravad A, had five brothers as her husbands. She told me that one of them was specially good and affectionate, and so she loved him better than she did the others. This, however, did not prevent her from serving them dutifully or sleeping with them, though she did so with less of joy than in the case of her favourite husband. K's daughter was married to four brothers, but the eldest of them, a thriving practitioner of Indian medicine, wanted to monopolise her for himself. There were some bickerings among the brothers on account of this. On one or two occasions, the youngest of the four husbands, it is reported, carried her forcibly to his bedroom as the eldest of the brothers was found not to allow her to keep to the turns. Disgusted with these quarrels, she requested her parents to take her to their home. Her parents and brothers said, "We gave our 'girl' to four men. The demand made by one of them to have her exclusively for himself is unjust and we cannot agree to it, lest it be said of us that we were responsible for the break up of their joint family." After some time the woman returned to her husbands' home again as their common wife. Soon each of the four brothers married individually, and the common wife remained attached to the eldest brother, who, though exceedingly immoral, was, at the same time, very clever in his profession. On his death, she did not like remaining with the other husbands and so returned to her brothers. Being childless, she had no claim to her husband's property.

Another episode from a polyandrous family of blacksmiths throws some side light on the rules of fraternal polyandry. The common wife of five brothers became too weak to look after the comforts of all of them. The youngest of the brothers who was not much older than his own eldest "son" expressed a wish to have a new wife for himself. The wife advised him that the proper procedure was for the eldest brother to marry again a younger woman and for them all to share her.

The simple form of polyandry where several brothers have one wife in common is giving place to several new forms. The brothers may divide themselves into two or three batches for purposes of marriage; or they go on for some time with one wife, then some of them leave

the joint concern and have separate wives for themselves; others remain in the partnership and also have additional wives. I was told of an interesting instance of a marriage of a member of a polyandrous group at which, in order to deprive him and his bride of any monopoly of each other, five of his brothers and their three common wives sat in row at the milk-giving ceremony, on either side of the marrying pair.

The compficacies which are pointed in the foregoing paragraphs are rather rare, and are the results of jealousies which, in most normal cases, are absent; and it is a wonder how they maintain such harmony. In fact, I was told by a very intelligent member of a polyandrous group that the disintegration of joint families is prevented by the brothers having a common wife, as, through her influence, all fissiparous tendencies are avoided.

The chief cultural forces that lead to the suppression of the emotion of jealousy[1] in the men are (1) the ritual of marriage by which they are made joint husbands; (2) the economic motive to prevent the disintegration of the family property by limiting the number of heirs; (3) the influence of parents who during the earlier years of maritial partnership supervise and regulate the sexual life of the co-husbands by assigning each of the husbands a particular day to be with the wife; and (4) public opinion which applauds successful polyandry. Under conditions of culture change all these social forces have weakened and in every family in which changed conditions prevail bickerings are heard that have their root in sexual jealousy, individual likes and dislikes, ascertion of personal rights, and rebellion against the authority of elders in sexual matters.

This evidence from one of the few polyandrous peoples of the world points to the conclusion that sexual jealousy is under certain cultural conditions capable of being repressed almost to the vanishing point, but the dangerous emotion re-appears when the inhibition of culture weakens. If it is so difficult to keep jealousy under control within a group of three or four brothers brought up in polyandrous traditions, it is almost impossible to imagine, as Bertrand Russel does, that it will disappear 'if it is recognized as bad' and people are educated to regard it as such.

If one asks the child of a polyandrous family for his father he would reply, " I have three fathers. Whom do you want?" Descriptions like 'big father,' 'small father', 'short father', 'fair father', and 'dark father', are not at all uncommon. I have found in some families fathers showing a particular partiality for children who resemble them closely. Coming to the question of inheritance, Thurston was obviously wrong in recording that property went down through the eldest wife. All the children born to the brothers have equal right, so that the superiority of the eldest brother or of the oldest of the wives does not come in for consideration at all. In the only law suit that came to my notice in which polyandry was invloved the English Judge completely misunderstood the position. The common wife

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[1] From *Man*, 130, (1937) where a photograph of a polyandrous marriage rite is also published.

of two brothers sued her husbands for maintenance. Witnesses were heard, the majority of whom gave evidence to show that both the brothers were married to her. But the judge awarded her the decree only against the elder brother!

When asked to explain to me the advantages of the polyandrous marriage a well-to-do Irava told me,—" It keeps all the brothers together; union and co-operation gives us strength, and therefore, our community ranks as the best agriculturists in the country. We can be sure that our children are our own. A woman will have one or other of her husbands always by her side, so that her tendency to sin is obliterated." According to this man, women are by nature prone to sin if their appetite for sexual enjoyment is not kept super-satiated. He, however, agreed with me in thinking that polyandry meant a great strain for the women.

Polyandry now survives particularly in the marginal areas among the less advanced members of the Irava and Kammala castes. That it was once more wide-spread also is clear. The Iravas now have the normal sex ratio, and as they are mainly an agricultural people, it would be advantageous for them to have more women married into a joint family. So neither the idea of economy nor paucity of women fully explains Irava polyandry. The Iravas were never known to have a practised female infanticide. Unlike the polyandrous Kandyans of Ceylon they had no feudal lord to serve for long terms. Irava polyandry must, therefore, have been an ancient institution that originated in response to the cultural, economic and sexual needs and circumstances of the distant past which no longer hold good, the natural consequence being that the institution has become unpopular. Differences in occupations and income and the development of new sexual standards are the two active causes that one sees in operation to put an end to polyandry. Formerly the members of an Irava family had very few avocations to select from. They worked for the joint family and pooled their resources no one caring to have anything reserved for himself. The estate was common, the houses were common and so were the wives and children. It was a case of familial co-operation carried to the fullest possible extent.

CHAPTER V—ECONOMICS, NEW AND OLD.

ECONOMICS AND ANTHROPOLOGY.

In studying the economics of simpler peoples the anthropologist is not trespassing on a sister discipline, but applying to it the proper corrective, namely, carrying the analysis of the institutions concerned with the production and distribution of wealth deeper into those intangible " non-economic " realms, and showing that economics cannot be isolated from other aspects of culture and be dealt with as though in a vacuum. If the principles of economics are to have a predictive value, social institutions of which economic activities are a part should form the background of economic studies. Prof. B. Malinowski, who made the first contribution to economic anthropology, and Dr. R. Firth who followed up the study further in its theoretical relations to general economics, have questioned the scientific nature of some of the initial postulates or axioms of the economist. The Indian followers of European economists however find it impossible to start any study of economics without going into those sociological encumbrances so irritating to the orthodox economist, such as the religious faith and beliefs. In my own field, it is of interest to find that orthodox economists have been forced to deal with magic and sorcery in the study of the economics of Malabar villages. This is in a way a vindication from an unexpected area of the theoretical soundness of the functional method in economic anthropology.[1]

In discussing the social organisation of the Iravas, I had to refer frequently to the expansion of the economic sphere of the Iravas and its repercussions on caste in general and the internal organization of their own caste and family system. Culture change brought new needs which had to be met in new ways devised for them, such as the father instead of the matrilineal guardian meeting the expenses of the English education of a boy, while the expenses of the traditional education was met by the matrilineal clan. I have referred again to the rise in the standard of life, due to the new sense of decency, and new tastes in general. In the section on changes in ritual and religion, I shall be showing how economics helped changes in this most uneconomical of all human activities. These few hints are in themselves proof of the urgent necessity for the practical student of economics to carry on his analysis in its institutional setting.

Economics of the Malabar villages has been studied from the non-anthropological point of view by several students, especially Subbarama Iyer[2] under the stimulus provided by Gilbert Slater. The technological details and the description of the crops and their marketing are dealt with in official publications, the most sumptous of which is the " Travancore State

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[1] For a full statement of the theoretical bearings of Primitive Economics, *see* Firth, *Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori*, and a stimulating article, " Anthropology looks at Economics " in *Science and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2.

[2] *Economic Life of a Malabar Village* (Bangalore, 1925).

Manual" by Nagam Aiya. The anthropologist still looks in vain in them for the factors that are of special interest to him, for such important questions as the nature of the stimuli for work, division of labour in the family, the emotional, apart from the traditional attitude of men towards their work, etc., are left practically untouched. From the point of view of the study of culture change, not a single systematic effort has been made to analyse the nature of the changes introduced into the wealth-producing activities of the people of Malabar. Men are just aware of the changes, but are so involved in them to get a correct perspective. In discussing economic problems political prejudices of the writers naturally their conclusions vitiate attempts being made to stress either the evil or good effects of the contact with the west. The anthropologist has here the special advantage of being able to approach the economic problem of culture contact from a less prejudiced angle. His familiarity with the phenomena of culture change and interracial situations all over the world makes his judgment more balanced.

CASTE-LINKED WORK.

When we start the study of the econimics of the Iravas, caste again obtrudes itself on us. Every caste, as we saw, has a traditional hereditary occupation. An Irava describes toddy making as his *kula-toril* (tribal profession), but it is by no means the only profession that members of this class follow, though it is the speciality of the caste in so far as no other caste takes it up. Logan has described the Iravas as the planters of Malabar, for the cultivation of the coconut tree which makes the littoral region of the country a vast orchard has been the traditional work of the caste from time immemorial. In folksongs, the best nuts are described as those produced in the garden of the chief of the Iravas. We also saw that articles of ceremonial use obtained from the coconut tree have to be got always through the Irava. In Southern Travancore, we noted that the aristocratic section of the Iravas, the Channars, were weavers and this profession gave the whole caste in Travancore the nick name *chilanti* (spiders) from the similarity of the spider weaving its web to the Iravas' work on the loom. Many Iravas are practitioners of the indigenous system of medicine, and their skill has been recognized even in official publications. One of native physicians who assisted in the compilation of the *Hortus Malabaricus* (1608-1703) was an Irava of Travancore, by name Itti-Achutan. This Dutch botanical work in twelve volumes will ever remain a proof of the antiquity of Iravan proficiency in the knowledge of medicinal plants. The largest proportion of the Iravas are however those engaged in rice cultivation as tenant farmers and labourers, the actual labourer caste being the Cherumas. Going into the history of several families of medical practitioners, I found that two or three generations ago many of them had some one or other of their ancestors engaged in the special caste profession of toddy-making. A typical case of family economic history may be given here to illustrate the point just mentioned; my informant was an old widow about eighty years old whose sons are medical men. In answer to my query, she said, " The grandfather of my husbands (she had three) came here

from Mankata further north. Here there was then no toddy maker, and so there was good scope for business. He tapped several fish-tail and palmyra palms and used to sell the wine and arrack to the villagers. Then he married and settled in the village. His wife used to sell the wine, etc., and collect the paddy (rice) got in exchange for them. The sale and distillation were the work of the women in those days. He was a good worker, and by his frugality he was able to grow somewhat rich, and buy some lands. He lived and died in an extremely small hut which stood where our kitchen now stands. The bigger house and the 'granary house' (double storied house, the lower part of which is used for storing paddy) were built by his sons. My husbands discontinued the ancestral profession, one of them studying *vaidyam* (medicine) at my house. My sons are all *vaidyas*, and all our relatives are also *vaidyas*." Medical practice is now more lucrative than toddy business encumbered as it is with heavy excise duties, but before it was taxed it was really paying. People were anxious to give their daughters in marriage to families where the profession was traditionally followed. They used to say, "In the house where there is toddy-tapping, there will be no poverty." If we go backwards into the history of the Iravas, it is possible to understand the significance of this attitude to the profession. Families specialised in this trade, established reputations for their produce, and extended their business, as we have seen. We do not know the exact manner in which competition was curtailed, but the same tradition of keeping to ancestral professions as much as possible must have been more valid in the more remote past than during recent years. While what is known in Malabar as "traditional or caste profession" is not the only profession that an individual can choose for himself, caste limits the range of choice considerably. No other caste than the Iravas think even today of having toddy-making as their business, though many others are competing with the Iravas as contractors for the sale of the wine. No Irava without losing his self-respect does the work of a washerman or even a professional fisherman, though any one may go fishing occasionally. The profession of arms was generally that of the Nayars, but there is evidence that some chiefs had Irava soldiers also.

The Irava had under the most favourable circumstances to limit his choice within the three or four professions mentioned above. If he were to choose the professions of the castes who were socially his inferiors he suffered ridicule or even excommunication, and if he chose those of his superiors which was normally impossible, he met with condign punishment. From this old world state of affairs if we turn to the conditions of the present day, we see very significant changes. The following table of occupations of the Iravas of Travancore makes the point clear[1]:

Occupation.	PER 1,000.
Toddy drawers	38
Cultivators, owners and tenants ...	316

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[1] Travancore Census, 1931.

Occupation.	PER 1,000.
Field labourers and wood-cutters ...	160
Industries	223
Transport	34
Trade	76
Lawyers, doctors, teachers	13
Domestic servants	12
Others	128

The so-called caste-profession is not of much importance from the numerical stand point. It cannot naturally be great, because the commodity produced has a limited market. Agriculture occupies the leading position, and next to it industries chief among which is the production of coir yarn from coconut fibre. New items which have come into the list of professions are trade, the learned professions such as law, medicine and teaching (in which category, service under the State should be included), and transport. The coir yarn industry, unlike weaving, is post-British in origin, and supports a very large number of Iravas, many of whom made their fortunes from it. The recent prosperity of the Iravas is therefore directly traceable to European contact, which gave them wider opportunities in the economic, as in other spheres of life.

TODDY TRADE.

Toddy drawing as the special profession of the Iravas deserves full treatment to begin with, especially since it has not been dealt with in any great detail even in such a comprehensive publication as Mr. Nagam Aiya's *Travancore Manual*. The average Irava, if he is not of the extreme modernist school, is not at all ashamed of the profession, but is on the other hand proud of it. The toddy drawer's work did not put him to the necessity of working in the mud like the agricultural worker, gave him more leisure every day, though no holidays, since the trees required attention every day. As the supplier of drinks to his villagers, he usually enjoyed considerable popularity in their midst. Every afternoon ~~and~~ or/ evening Nayars and Cherumas/ and a host of others would go to his house to have their drink, and all of them would be more or less permanent customers. Before distillation of arrack from the fermented toddy was made a government monopoly, the surplus produce used to be distilled in a crude still. Distilled liquor was costly and would be drunk by people on festive days and used for offering to the spirits of ancestors. The strict letter of the caste law required the toddy drawer himself to abstain from drinking, which was no doubt a precautionary measure. Most people violated this rule, but there were some who remained perfectly " dry ". In addition to the palm wine, and the distilled liquor *tāvaram* or arrack, the Iravas tapped sweet toddy for the preparation of palm sugar. Cane sugar was, as a rule, costly and used only by the Brahmans and in the temples. Most people depended on the Iravas for their supply of sugar. The preparation of the sugar from the sweet toddy was the work of the women (plate vi, fig. 2). In South

Travancore where the aristocratic Iravas considered it shameful to produce and sell toddy, it was quite honourable for them to distil arrack from it and sell it. The feeling against the toddy drawers' profession is recent, as we saw in the chapter on caste. Moreover it has ceased to be as lucrative as it used to be.

The new excise regulations prohibit the sale of toddy except by licensed contractors of shops situated in localities defined by the State. The toddy drawers' licence has to be got through the contractor of the shop. A half-yearly tax has to be paid on every tree "tapped." This is in addition to the rent that is usually paid to the owners of the trees. If the toddy drawer effects any private sale of toddy, or if he is late in bringing his yield to the shop, he is liable to be fined. So, now between the toddy drawer and the Government there are the contractors as the middlemen. Most of the Iravas are unable to meet the initial cost of getting the trees on rent and paying the tree tax, with the result that they get employed as low-paid tappers under the contractors. As a part of their prohibitionist policy, the Governments have been steadily raising the taxes on all drinks, under the belief that a lesser number of people will pay the high price for the drinks. The taxes have been more than doubled during the last two decades. The effect of this is not quite appreciable on the clientele of the toddy shop, but it has entailed greater hardships on the toddy tapper. It is not uncommon, therefore, for some toddy drawers to try illicit sale of toddy, to convert trees that have been licensed at a lower rate for sweet toddy into fermented toddy trees, and try illicit distilling during festive seasons. Every village has its fund of stories of the toddy drawers' fight with the officials of the Excise department. Apart from the interference by the State, another factor that makes the liquor business progressively unprofitable is the growing taste for tea that even the lowest castes are developing. While tea is less costly, it is more fashionable. The very large number of tea shops that come up in rural areas are the resort of the young men not only for drinking tea, but for gossip also. To the Iravas as a whole the profession of toddy tapping has become less important than it was during the pre-British days.[1] Their monopoly of the trade has been completely broken by the State taking it over and taxing it heavily. The only tax they had to pay in the old days was a small amount known as ***katti panam*** (knife-money) or tax on the tapper's knife.

There is demand for tappers from Malabar in the interior of Ceylon, where many have emigrated especially from central Malabar. In Ceylon, whole gardens of coconut trees are tapped for toddy, and the toddy drawer is saved the trouble and exertion of climbing up and down each tree, by having ropes tied between one tree and its neighbours so that he can walk along them in the manner of acrobats from tree to tree. While the maximum number of trees that the best toddy drawer taps in Malabar is fifteen, in Ceylon a person manages twenty-five to thirty trees very easily.

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[1] The share of the contractors' profit that goes to the officials as gifts of a customary nature (*mamul*) is considerable. For details of official corruption, the reader is referred to an interesting book *Southern India*, by Gilbert Slater.

A comparative study of the methods of toddy making from the coconut tree has been made by Copeland[1] to which little has to be added here. Tapping the inflorescence of the palmyra and the bastard sago (fish-tail) palms is more difficult and arduous. The former is very rough and tall and straight, and the latter, exceedingly stout (plate ii, fig. 1). The palmyra tapper protects himself with a breast-plate when climbing up or down the tree (plate iv). In the case of the sago palm, a long single bamboo ladder and a scaffolding of the same material are provided for getting up and down the tree and for standing upon while working on the huge pendulous inflorescence. In plate ii, fig. 1, the man can be seen bending over the tip of the inflorescence. Each of the several spikes in it has to be pressed for about a fortnight before the tips can be cut and the vessel for receiving the sap tied to it. In the palmyra palm, the sharp edges of the leaf-stalk are also dangerous. Tapping the coconut tree is easier than both the former. Here the risk involved is the fear of some of the older leaf-stalks yielding under the man's weight or his feet slipping. Accidental deaths of tappers are not uncommon. As the tapper begins his work on the first tree in the morning, before putting his feet on it to climb up he salutes the tree by touching it and then touching his own forehead with the same finger. This respect for the palms that give him his levelihood is shown in many of the Iravan stories regarding them. To look at the coconut or palmyra palm early in the morning immediately after one gets up is very auspicious. The coconut tree is useful in so many different ways that it is called the *kalpaka* tree (a tree in heaven that grants all wishes).

The apparatus used by the tappers is seen in plates iv and v. A sharp knife is required for cutting slices of the inflorescence every morning and evening. A weighted shin bone of the deer is used to massage and bruise the inflorescence to stop its growth which would burst the bract. The exact amount of massage and beating with the bone is an essential part of the knowledge of the tapper which has to be gained by experience. A small receptacle of the leaf-sheath of the areca palm contains a paste of *āññila* leaf which is extremely slimy and is used to coat the cut end of the inflorescence. In a bamboo vessel water is carried with which to wash the vessel in which the sap is collected. If it is not kept clean the sap goes sour very quickly. If a tree yields a very large quantity of sap, the tapper is afraid of the evil eye of jealous persons falling on it, and so he takes care to collect it unnoticed by others. Evil eye or black magic causes the inflorescence to dry up, or yield scantily. It is very common for tappers to pour a little toddy in coconut-shell cups placed in front of pieces of stones representing Karinkutti, and Kalladi Muttan, two spirits popular among magicians. In plate v, the man has a large vessel of sewn areca-leaf sheath for collecting the toddy from the tree. This vessel has the advantage of being lighter and proof against breakage unlike the gourd or earthen vessels used by the palmyra tappers in plate iv. Rings of rope are used to assist the feet and hands in climbing.

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[1] E. B. Copeland, *The Coconut* (London, 1914).

One important feature to be noted in the technology of the toddy tapper's apparatus is the persistence of extremely primitive utensils made directly from nature. Observing the great trouble some tappers known to me took to replace a broken bamboo vessel, I suggested to one why he did not think of replacing it with light aluminium vessels. He said it would spoil the toddy. What becomes obvious is that the will to experiment is absent. Even the contractors are most of them comparatively poor men with little capital. The laboratories of the Government department of Excise are used only for the purpose of detecting adulteration of toddy with limed sweet toddy which is cheaper. Little attention is paid to the problem of improving the yield of the palms or the methods of marketing it. Unfermented toddy has great refreshing and tonic qualities, and if it were possible to arrest the fermentation by some chemical means, its commercial possibilities are great.

To the Irava the toddy that he manufactures has ritual virtues. If a man was too ill to bathe and undergo the purificatory rituals for removing the pollution due to the death of a near relative, it used to be the custom to make him touch a pot containing toddy, which was believed to make him ritually pure.

The carrying of the toddy to the shop of the contractor if it were near would be done usually by the wife of the tapper, but if it were far, he would take it himself.

The manufacture of crude sugar or jaggery from sweet toddy is, as stated above, one of the functions of the women of the tapper's household. The correct liming of the sweet sap to prevent it from turning alcoholic and at the same time not making it too alkaline is the difficult technical part of the man's work. While the husband is collecting the sap from the trees, the wife busies herself gathering dry leaves for fuel a large quantity of which is usually required to boil the liquid down to the required consistency. When the fluid is viscous, the woman tests it by dropping a small quantity into water and then feeling it with her fingers. Then a samll quantity of the viscous matter is taken on a wooden plank and is ground till it becomes a powder, which is dropped into the vessel on the fire-place. The hot semi-solid stuff is now poured into several coconut shell cups with small holes at the bottom covered with bits of green leaves (plate vi, fig. 2). The hemispherical cake of brown sugar taken out of the coconut-shell moulds is called jaggery or *chakkara*. This is the sugar still largely used for making sweets in all rural homes, but for tea the refined sugar is in demand. Jaggery is going out of fashion even for sweets in the more urbanised homes. Large quantities of it however are being purchased by the agents of the sugar refineries that are springing up in various parts of South India. The Brahmans and other higher castes have a prejudice against using jaggery, because it is made by the Iravas. But for imported sugar, refined with animal carbon, they have no objection. The Agricultural department in Madras is trying to teach Irava women to make cleaner jaggery which will be lighter in colour than that manufactured by them now. But this will be solving the problem only. partially. As long as the whole community is not free from the prejudice against the caste of the

manufactures, the classes which require clean and refined sugar will not go in for the jaggery that the refined method will put on the market. The lower castes are even now more or less satisfied with brown jaggery. Here better marketing facilities are a great desideratum.

AGRICULTURE.

Agriculture is a common factor in the economic activities of most castes. Nayars are mainly agriculturists, employing for the harder work Cheruma labourers, who, in spite of the abolition of slavery by law, are slaves in reality with only a semblance of freedom. Those Cherumas who are emancipated and are not attached to any farmer, whether Irava or Nayar, feel themselves handicapped that they have no protector and lord. Slavery still continues in the backward areas of Malabar, and members of the serf castes are even now sold and mortgaged, as any other movable property! Just as property was regarded *janmam* (freehold) or *kanam* (mortgage), Cherumas were also regarded as freehold or mortgaged, according to the proprietory interest the owner had in him. The Tandan of Appa " house " in Valluvanad told me that his father purchased a Janmam Cheruma and his wife for 500 *panams* (about £13) about sixty years ago. All the expenses for marriages and death ceremonies have to be paid by the master of the slave. The slave is paid a small allowance when there is no work, but when there is work he is paid more. The better class of farmers have several families of serfs under their control. The poorer farmers do most of the work themselves employing day labourers only occasionally when there is heavy pressure of work. Agriculture is therefore an activity which is organised in a complex manner, and the institution of serfdom plays a very important part in it. The fact that there is among the Nayars a section called *vellāyma sudra* (agricultural sudra) which is regarded as a very high group recalls the theory of caste that was put forward in an earlier chapter (p.).

Overpopulation and scarcity of land are the two vexed economic problems of modern Malabar. There is keen competition among tenant farmers of the Nayar, Irava, Mohammadan, and Christian groups for getting the available land on lease from the rich landlords of the Brahman and Nayar castes. The managers and private secretaries of the landlords who control the leases have great influence over the tenantry. The competition among the tenant farmers leads to the terms of the lease being generally very unfavourable to the cultivators, leaving them only a meagre share of the net produce.

As much of the work on the farm as can be done without seeking outside help is done by the farmers family itself. Ploughing is the hardest part of the work. The younger members of the family and the workmen work with the oxen till mid-day. The number of times the field is ploughed is important, since the yield is proportional to the degree of the loosening of the soil. " The yield is on the plough." This is the native saying on this subject. The Indian plough is well-known to be unsatisfactory for the purpose, but as long as the cattle are of the poor breed that obtains in Malabar, nothing can be done in the

matter of improved kinds of ploughs. The women follow the men and break the clods with a heavy stick. There are two ways of sowing the seeds. The first, which is the easier of the two, consists of sowing the seeds broadcast and then turning the sod over. The other method is to make shallow furrows with the plough in which women drop a few grains of the seed. In the case of the latter, weeding is comparatively easier. Weeding is a strictly feminine task. Reaping is more a women's work than men's, yet many men do it. It is a convention that the men and women who worked during the sowing and weeding should be asked to do the reaping also, for they have done the heavy part of the work. Payment for the harvesting is always in kind, the rate differing in the different parts of the country. In the extreme north it is one twelfth of the gross number of sheaves, threshing being paid at the rate of $\frac{1}{20}$th of the grain threshed. For the second crop harvesting is paid at the $\frac{1}{16}$th proportion. The loose ears that fall down on the threshing floor when sheaves are brought in and heaped prior to threshing are given to the boys. In Central Malabar, the wages for harvesting and threshing are combined, and are $\frac{1}{11}$th of the gross produce. Strictly speaking these payments cannot be called wages, for compared to the usual rates of daily wages paid for agricultural labour, these are overgenerous, and should be regarded as a system of profit-sharing. The agriculturists do not call them wages (*valli*), but ***patambu***. The straw after threshing is heaped up for a time and then beaten with sticks to break it and also to get out the grains that remain in it. This is again women's work the payment for which is on the daily wage basis.

Both agriculturists and non-agriculturists, when they eat the new rice harvested in the season, make it a ritual occasion called ***puttari*** (new rice). Sometimes the ***puttari*** ceremony is celebrated even before the harvest. A few ears of grain are brought from the field and the new rice is added to sweets made of old rice, and all the family led by the eldest of them eat of it. It is improper for any one to cook and eat the rice of the new harvest without first celebrating ***puttari***. The villagers can have their ***puttari***, only after ***puttari*** has been celebrated in the village temple.

Richer people eat only the rice that has been kept long in the granary. Fresh rice is heavier and less tasteful. To eat hurriedly prepared rice is a mark of want. Hence people inclined to show themselves off have a stock of " old rice ". Similarly, the smaller the grains of rice the greater the prestige attached to its habitual eater. Large grained rice is eaten by the poorer people.

Harvest is always followed by a season of feasting, before the work for the second crop begins. After the ***onam*** festivities, the young men return again to their work with a sigh. " Onam has come and gone, and we are again in the field " is the common remark. People meeting each other in the fields accost one another asking, " Is your ***onam*** over ?".

Ploughing is now done in the water mixed with mud and stubble. Green manure is added now as it will easily putrify and enrich the soil. Seedling paddy that has been grown

in special plots are now transplanted to ensure a harvest within the shortest possible time before the onset of the dry season from December onwards.

After the second crop most fields lie fallow till the beginning of the agricultural season in April-May. The peasants have now their long holiday season for nearly three months, when they spend most of their time on their orchard crops, such as areca, coconut etc., and in partaking in the religious activities of their own and neighbouring villages.

I have already shown in the chapter on social organisation how the village artisans and others co-operate with the farmers in their work p.). For the *puttari* farmers give them and the Vannan and the Pana three to five measures of rice. The last-mentioned functionary makes evil-eye figures and sticks them in the fields to prevent the crop from suffering on account of evil-eye.

MODERN TRENDS.

One of the aspects of the economic life of Malabar that has been least favourably affected by the contact with the new culture is agriculture. The peasants have in the first place been adversely affected especially in British Malabar by the unfortunate changes introduced in the land tenure (see p.). The poverty of the tenant and the smallness of his holdings and his general ignorance make it impossible for him to take advantage of the discoveries of the Agricultural Department. An educated farmer tried the scientific method of single seedling transplantation method which has been found so successful in Japan, but somehow, for some unforeseen reason, the experiment was not a success, and the villagers began to ridicule the person who tried the innovation. Coconut cultivation is improving in Ceylon because of the greater care in manuring, to which the bigger landowners pay special attention. People in Malabar have not yet begun to take the activities of the official agricultural demonstrators seriously. Rural reconstruction movement has not yet been started in Malabar and the Government has only touched the fringe of the agricultural problems of the people.

The ineffectiveness of the work of the Government is partly due to a lack of understanding of the psychology of the people. I shall illustrate the point by an example. One great difficulty in agriculture is the problem of manure. Human excreta is not put to any use in most villages of Malabar, unlike in the rural areas of China. To make the villagers use it as manure is a difficult task because of the popular prejudice against it. Instead of giving up the efforts in that direction, the strategic point in the psychology of the people has to be understood and made use of. This consists in discovering village leadership wherever it exists. The natural leaders of the people who were also the people in authority disappeared by the end of the eighteenth century, and their place is still vacant, but occasionally, some individual or other commands the respect of the village by some outstanding qualities. The Governments should get hold of the leaders of the village and ask them to try the experiments and set an example to the people. Most villagers are timid in the matter of effecting

innovations, but they are not unwilling to follow new traditions if it is backed with the authority of the village opinion and not merely by the talks of the agricultural demonstrator. No direct appeal to the villagers however reasonable will be productive of results unless it be made through persons respected by them.

The contact with Europe has however helped the extension of the agricultural and industrial activities of the people in several new directions. In other parts of the world especially Dutch East Indies the complaint is very commonly heard that the essential food crops of the people have been displaced by commercial crops. In Malabar, fortunately, such revolutionary changes did not take place, the best land being already under rice cultivation. It was only the orchard cultivation that was, to begin with, affected by the trade with Europe. Pepper, ginger and coconut required different kinds of soil from that required for rice. The spice trade being mostly a state monopoly in the early days of European contact, the profit from the trade really enriched the chiefs and not the people. Later on, the boom in the price of coconut produce led to a limited extent to the conversion of inferior rice lands to coconut orchards. The coir yarn industry that now sprang up was without any parallel in the past. Part of the money got by the export of the orchard produce has to be spent on rice imported from Burma, as Malabar produces only about two-thirds of the rice required by her people. The exploitation of the forests and the tea and coffee plantations in the higher ranges of the Ghats provided employment for the surplus population without in any way affecting the land under rice.

Far from reducing the available food supply of the people of Malabar, the European contact helped the solution of the food problem very considerably. The traditional stress laid on distribution of food to the poor indicates that the food problem should have been keen in India long before the contact with the west. Of course if we are to believe the accounts of the old men people had more food to eat about fifty years ago than they have now. They themselves without any statistical aid realise that one of the causes of the food scarcity now is the great increase in population. The fact remains to-day that among the Iravas, it will not be an over-estimate to say that in about 90 per cent of the families, not all the members have enough of the staple food, rice, to eat to satiety. Rice has been in recent years replaced to a great extent by the cheaper tapioca in Travancore. Tapioca was introduced into this country by the Portuguese, who also introduced the cashewnut which growing in waste lands where nothing else would grow, provided people with the highly relished nuts and the juicy fruits both of which have in recent years become commercially important. The gains accruing from the commercial link with the west far outweigh the losses, especially in the matter of food-stuffs.

SOCIOLOGY OF THE KITCHEN.

Some of the sociological aspects of the kitchen of the Iravas have been already dealt with on p. . In the matter of the comsumption of food the difference between the rich and the

poor is significant. Two meals a day for the poor, and three for the rich is the general practice. The division of the food among the members of a joint family becomes a difficult and serious responsibility of the oldest of the women of the household, since it has to be done with impartiality and in proportions corresponding to the economic importance of the individuals. Women as a rule get less than the men, girls less than the boys. Favouritism shown to any one leads to quarrels. Younger workers in the family supplement what they get in the house by eating food purchased in the tea-shops where boiled tapioca roots, sweet potato, beaten and parched rice, etc., are usually sold. Because they are the earning members and as such require more nourishment, this is becoming the general practice nowadays. For the more respectable people to eat anything from wayside shops is a shame. This however is not true of the towns where the residents and visitors from villages who go on business have to eat in hotels. Sale of food is a new business in Malabar. Formerly wayfarers either carried small parcels of food or otherwise stepped into houses on the way and asked for food. There were also rest-houses (*vari-ampalam*) where they could take shelter for the night and cook their food if they carried provisions with them. To supply thirsty travellers with butter-milk drinks, there were along important routes, what were known as "water-sheds" (*taṇṇīr-pandal*) endowed by charitably disposed villagers. These institutions, the relics of the ancient public spirit of the people of Malabar, have most of them disappeared, and in their place have come the tea-shops and the "rice-shops". The rich no longer consider it their duty to provide the simple amenities to the poorer members of the public. Distribution of food to the poor during the starvation months following the monsoon was an invariably done by all those who could afford the expenses, but this form of charity is also now on the wane. It is the food problem again that induces young men to emigrate to the cities where they become day labourers, workers in the small mills, and employees in the numerous little shops on small salaries. The importance of the food question in Malabar is reflected in the morning prayer which poor mothers teach their little ones. "God, let me get rice to eat."

Animal food in the form of fish is plenty in the coastal area and near the backwater area. Failure in recent years of the once plentiful supply of sardines has affected the food supply of the coastal regions of the country very much. Meat food is a luxury. "Killing a fowl" is equivalent among the poor to making a feast, and it is done only on very important occasions, such as during the feast on fixing up a marriage, the visit of important guests such as a son-in-law or brother-in-law, or the ritual offering of food to the ancestral spirits.

Among the more educated classes of Iravas, slow changes are taking place in their tastes regarding food. Their own simple recipes are being slowly replaced by those of the Tamils who are more advanced in the culinary art. Most of the hotels in the urban areas are owned by Tamil Brahmans and from them the taste for their food spreads. Biscuits and bread are the only European articles sold in the tea-shops.[1]

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[1] For a description of the preparation of food by the lower castes of Malabar reference may be made to my paper on the Nayadis of Malabar [Madras Mus. Bull. Vol. II (1938), No. 4.]

HOUSES, CLOTHING, ETC.

Food though it is the most pressing of all human needs is not the sole item on which the wealth of the individual has to be spent. There is the shelter of a house necessary especially in the monsoon season. For the poorest who live in houses built for them by the owners of the compounds, the palm-leaf thatch is annually provided by the landlord himself. The floor of the house has to be kept smooth and properly smeared with clay and cowdung by the women of the house. The tenant farmers and other independent people live in more spacious houses of their own, and women have to spend more time in keeping them in order.. They take pride in having a polished black floor, clean red or white-washed walls, a clean-swept yard all round the house, and well polished brass vessels. In modern houses women are saved much work by having cemented floors which require little attention. Most Irava houses are thatched ones, only a small number being tiled. Renewing the thatch is the occasion for a grand feast to all the persons who assisted in the work. To have a house built on one's own plot of ground and surround it with orchard trees is the ambition of every villager.

Next to eating the most important physical necessity to the villager is clothing. In this matter his needs have been steadily increasing. His children require shirts or *ravukkas* in addition to the loin clothes. In the urban areas, coats and shirts have become inevitable necessaries of all respectable people. The sartorial developments in the changing culture of Malabar are made obvious by an examination of the apparels of the men in plates, and contrasting the dress of the women in plates iv ; vi, fig 2 ; xi. If civilisation is to be judged by clothes, then the people of Malabar are getting rapidly civilised.

The more educated among the Iravas as well as other castes have gone further to imitate the dress and other external characteristics of the European. On this the great art critic, Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy says, " The peoples of India and Ceylon are not like the Anglo-Saxons a brisk and self-assertive race. Accordingly, impressed by the foreigners' wealth, control of natural forces and political ascendency, they have not been unwilling to take him at his own valuation ; and feeling a desire for similar wealth and power have set themselves to imitate the external characteristics which they think must be their mysterious source."[1] The result of this unintelligent and unæsthetic imitation is that the imitators torture themselves in silence in the hot sultry air of their offices, courts, etc. In the earlier days of European influence, the slogan of the administrators and educationists was " clothes, more clothes ". The Christian missionaries were equally keen on clothing their converts well. When a start was thus made, without requiring further pressure; imitation proceeded apace. It is interesting in this connexion to note that the women of Malabar imitate the dress of their Tamil sisters on the other side of the Ghats, adopting their *sari*, which again is not quite suited to the climate of Malabar. With the rise of nationalism, this craze of imitation is given a set back,

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[1] " Anglicisation of the East," *The Ceylon National Review*, 1906.

and there is the hope that people will again revert to simpler dress with such slight modifications as may be regarded consistent with the new sense of decency, namely, that the upper half of the trunk should be covered especially by the women. The sartorial change, like other changes in the material culture of the people, equally affects all castes of the people from the Namputiri Brahman and the ruling families down to the lowest serf castes, the changes being in the same manner and direction.

Food, clothing and oil are considered as the three main items of the family budget. We have now to consider the last. To preserve one's health, to cool the system, and keep the skin smooth and moist, people apply oil of the coconut or gingelly all over their body. Rich people do so daily, others at least once a week. The oil thus smeared is removed with soap or some saponine barks. Soap has invaded the villages and has to a very great extent placed the barks.

Chewing betel nut is a luxury which has become a necessity to even the poorest man throughout the country. Some people would rather go without food than give up their betel nut even for a day. Offering a visitor betel nut to chew is the minimum in the native code of hospitality. Betel nut can be begged of a friend or a neighbour or even a casual acquaintance without the act being regarded as bad manners.[1] Among the younger generation chewing is being replaced by the evil habit of smoking *beedis* or cigarettes.

FEASTS AND GAMES.

In addition to the expenses on daily necessaries, there are the various annual and seasonal festivities and celebrations which make their demand on the man's earning. *Onam* is the most important of these. "*Kāṇam virrum oṇam uṇṇaṇam*" (Feast during the *onam*, even if you have to sell your *kanam* property) is the native saying regarding the importance of this festival. New clothes have to be purchased for all the members of the households, various customary gifts have to be made to the landlords, to the artisans and other dependant castes and feasting has to be continued for five or seven days. From August to May every month has one or two festive days. From January onwards, the temples have their festivities, and to witness as many of these as is possible is the ambition of the villagers. Going to them means money, and young men and women save money for the purpose and for buying fineries, such as mirrors and combs from the fairs held at the time of the festivals.

The urbanised and educated Irava is prone to attach no significance to these simple festivities. The commercial part of the temple festivities has ceased to be attractive because the things that are valued and regarded as luxuries by the villagers have become commonplace articles to them. Many of them regard the shaman dance, and the processions as vulgar, fit only for the uneducated. So an educated girl even in the villages

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[1] For other interesting details about the customs relating to the use of betel nut see "*Nayadis of Malabar*," and also my short article "Marriage by elopement among the Paniyans of Wynad" in *Man in India*, xvi, 1. (1936).

does not join her uneducated friends in their dances (plate vii, fig. 2), but prefers some new school games that she has learnt. An educated young woman does not want to give herself the warm pleasure of swinging in the ***urinnāl*** (a long bamboo swing suspended from the branch of a tree) during the *tiruvatira* season, when her unsophisticated sisters observe the fasts, sing and sport in the ponds during the short hours of the morning, all with the object of either getting good husbands or if married, of ensuring their husbands' health and prosperity. The so-called modern youth of Malabar want to behave in a different manner from their traditional norms. Thus through false teaching they deprive themselves of the sensory and the psychological gains of complete relaxation afforded by these irregular days of rest during the rural festivities. Life becomes a greater strain on the nerves of the young men and women passing through modern educational institutions. Their physical degeneration compared to the health of the rural folk has made the wiser among them ponder. Many local arts and crafts that were linked with village festivals are also naturally disappearing. Modern nationalist movement is in this respect also a healthy influence since it is directing the popular interest in the proper manner and effecting a re-integration of the culture of the people. Folk art such as *payirru* (fencing), dancing for woman, Malabar boxing (*oṇa-tallu*), *pūrakali* (men's dance), etc. are being revived one after the other, after years of neglect disregard verging on contempt.

More clothes, new tastes in food and luxuries, costlier education for the children—in short a higher standard of life is being established for the Iravas, but among them except a small number of officials and businessmen, most people do not as a rule have the means for the newer as well as the old traditional needs. There is the urgent need for economy, and the religious reformers opportunely enough advocated the lopping off of unnecessary ceremonials and curtailing the feasts and expenses of marriage and death ceremonies. These ceremonies with their long feasting impoverish many families. To illustrate the point by a concrete example : A in village M...... lost his old mother. He borrowed Rs. 1,000 to celebrate the death ceremony. Some of the villagers thought that he was going a bit too far. But his reply was " You can buy everything else in the world with your money, but can you get your parents for money ? To me my mother is greater than money." This is an extreme example quoted to show the way in which the average villager thinks about these feasts. This extravagance is not merely for the prestige which grand feasts bring, but also to show the affection a man has for the deceased. The reduction of the expenses for marriages is steadily progressing, the number of days of feasting being reduced from four to one. The *tāli-kettu* ceremony has also been more or less completely stopped. The next attempt is directed against the feasts in connection with death rituals.[1] One of the leaders of the Iravas, Mr. C. Krishnan of Calicut set the example by not having any feast when his mother died.

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[1] Keesing in his *Modern Samoa* records that the Manu's people abolished death feasts, the exchange of mats and other property at the time of marriage, and that this revolutionary changes were due to mission influence and education (p. 342).

He was a rationalistic, anti-Hindu Irava, popular among only one section of the community. The others, the pro-Hindu nationalists, and the uneducated villagers were shocked and said, "He is a stingy man. He wants to save the expenses." There is every likelihood of his example being followed by the advanced section of the Iravas. The changes in the corresponding beliefs concerning death that made this economic innovation possible will be described in the next chapter. Here the point to be remembered is that the reform was started in the biggest of Malabar towns by an Irava leader who had cut himself off from most Hindu traditions, and proclaimed that he had nothing to do with that faith. In rural areas death rituals and feasts continue as expensive and as elaborate as they were. Death involves not only the loss of a member of the family but entails also a severe drain on its financial resources.

EMIGRATION:

In discussing the economic history of the toddy trade we saw that many hundreds of Iravas who should have been in the toddy trade were driven out of it when it become a monopoly of the state. Similarly many of the Southern Travancore Iravas who were weavers lost their business as the result of the industrial revolution in Europe. The new coir industry absorbed a large number of them, but still there was a large surplus of people who had to seek work outside. The more enterprising ones emigrated to the big towns outside their own mother country, while others sought work in the home towns where nascent capitalistic enterprises, such as tile factories, weaving mills, etc. gave them employment. Ceylon has the largest number of rural Irava immigrants as labourers in the towns, as petty employees in the commercial houses and as small business men. These villagers return home with their earnings periodically to see their relatives, but they come changed men. They have been in closer contact with European culture in the towns and have developed new tastes which they transfer to their fellow villagers. The madness for learning to read and write infects them and the Irava labourers in Ceylon have won the commendation of all people who knew them for their remarkable industry in improving themselves culturally. Forming a close-knit community in the city of Colombo they have their own schools, associations and newspapers ; they take keen interest in all the reform movements in Malabar and support them financially. Prejudice against Indian labourers in Ceylon is making the economic prospects of the Irava emigrant gloomy, but up to the present, emigration has been greatly to their advantage. Many of them return home before they are too old to marry and settle down again in their own native villages. A very small minority only have made Ceylon their home. Most of the evils that the 'Indian peasants turned factory hands' are subject to in large industrial towns such as Bombay[1] are either absent or present only in a mild manner in the midst of the Irava workers in Ceylon. The influence of the teachings of their spiritual leader

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[1] Margaret Read, *The Indian Peasant Uprooted* (London, 1931).

(see next chapter) acted as a great force to unify the Iravas in Colombo in their efforts to improve themselves morally and materially. Urban workers in the towns of Malabar are not cut off from their village moorings, and the influence of the home prevents their degeneration. In the towns of Malabar, which as I have pointed out in an earlier chapter, are clusters of villages the emigrant from villages does not find himself in an entirely new world. He has more opportunities for work ; he learns more by mixing freely with all castes of people ; and when he returns to the village he is a more broad-minded person for his urban experiences.

PUBLIC SERVICE.

The small number of Iravas in the public services and in the learned professions as lawyers, doctors, etc., exert an influence out of all proportion to their numerical strength. They are undoubtedly the products of European contact, English education, and the result of the British desire that in the public services there shall be no distinction of caste or creed. The leaders of the community are recruited from this educated minority. In the native states with their old Hindu traditions, the Governments were very slow in appointing Iravas to administrative posts under them. We have already seen how difficult it was for some of them to overcome caste prejudice to carry on their work. Even for admission to the schools, the Iravas had to agitate and clamour in the Travancore State. Until recently, Iravas and Christians were not taken in the State army in Travancore, but the ban has now been lifted. In Cochin State, the State army is reserved only for Nayars. In both the States, the *Devaswam* (temple property) department is still closed to the Iravas, though they are Hindus and contribute to the wealth of the temples. Public service to the Iravas is not merely the income it brings to a few individuals, but a recognition of their equality. Many of the Irava public servants are village folk who have to spend their official life in either the rural areas, in the smaller, or in the bigger towns, and sometimes outside the Malabar country. They bring non-indigenous items of culture into their native villages. In a family one of the brothers may be a Government servant while the others may be farmers. In such situations the difference in the mode of life and in the income, etc., tends to separate them into different camps. The educated brother gets the cultural leadership of the family and they as a whole change more rapidly than other families in the village. But change is infectious and spreads from the focal centre of the first home. The educated man marries sometimes a wife from the town and she may be responsible for setting up the village maidens against old fashions. One of the fashions that is spreading at present to the villages is that of having only a small hole in the ear instead of the enlarged ear lobes. Women who already have enlarged lobes get them cut and reduced to the new size by the local surgeons. An Irava officer raises himself and his caste in the eyes of the superior castes. Any public servant, regardless of his caste, gets his share of respect from the villagers, even though he be a peon

or an attender in a court or office. It is not unnatural that the Iravas as a whole feel greateful for the first generous action of the British rulers in entertaining them in the public services on a footing of equality with the highest castes.

GROWTH OF MONEY SENSE.

The vast changes in the economic conditions of Malabar made a redistribution of the wealth among the members of the community. Families that were least favourably placed in their villages went out and returned rich. Fortunes of the trade cycle made petty shopkeepers suddenly masters of immense wealth. A new money sense developed in the place of the old respect for traditional rank and status. "Money will make even a dead body open its mouth.." "Even the kite cannot soar above money." "When you crave for money, you have no respect for any one ; for money a younger brother will kill his elder brother." "Many of the quarrels in the world are due to either money or women". These and numerous other native sayings give us an understanding of the importance of money and the evils of the money sense according to the people of Malabar. According to the ethics of old Malabar the more a man gave, the more prosperous he would grow. A generous man is compared to a well from which water is drawn, which instead of drying up again gets fresh water from the sub-soil to replenish what is lost as gifts. The villagers are still generous though not to this ideal degree. As an example of it, nothing is more distasteful to them in settling some accounts than when one of the parties goes into some of the very insignificant items. In village stores, it is common for the customers to ask for a little extra something after they have been given their money's worth. But the growing intensity of the struggle for existence is removing all the finer shades of the character of the people of Malabar. A proud rich class is growing up which has no better notions than those useful for their self-aggrandisement. Of them the Malayalam saying runs, "He who had no wealth, but gets rich suddenly, will carry an umbrella at midnight (when there is no sun).

WOMEN AND WORK.

In the expansion of the economic life of the country women have been as much involved as the men. Women in Dravidian India were not expected to be cooped in as they were in Northern India. They shared with their men in out-door activities with great freedom. To work in the field or on the threshing floor meant no loss of prestige for them. But certain activities were considered manly and others womanly. For example, a woman bringing mangoes down by throwing a short stick at the bunches—a very common way of doing it instead of climbing up the big trees—will be considered as doing a manly thing, and will be ridiculed for it. Hoe work is occasionally done by women, but they are then considered to be behaving like men. Pounding rice, grinding condiments, etc., are women's tasks. These sexual differentiations in cultural matters extend even to the swinging of arms while walking, women being expected to swing them gently, and not vigorously like men. Women in the

urban areas began to be employed to begin with in the factories owned by missionaries in Calicut town. With the greater demand for tailored clothes many women trained by the missionaries took to the sewing machines. In the rural areas along the coast, the spinning of coir yarn and rope and the beating of coconut fibre absorbed many hundreds of women. The former has the advantage of being a cottage industry. In English education the Irava women of North Malabar led the other communities. The first women in the country to be entertained in public service were from their midst. But what interests us more than anything else in the present context is the change that came over in the attitude of the men towards the question of the work of their women out of the home. Men began to regard it a shame for the women to go out and work. Even those who could ill afford to do so withdrew their women from out-door work due to the newly engendered sense of respectability. Such women would not go to the market or the bazaar, but remain more or less in or near the home. This was a retrogade change from the feminist stand-point. The average Irava thus approximated more to the orthodox Hindu standard in his attitude towards women. Except the enfranchised few among the urban women, and the poorer women who had to go to earn their livelihood, the women among the Iravas, both in the towns and in the villages, thus enjoy less freedom of movement than their mothers did. This tightening of the control of man over woman has to be related to the changes in feminine dress in the more Hindu direction. Thus in the midst of the women, we are able to see three different norms now: (1) a very small number who are europeanised in ideas and are free; (2) an unfree middle group confined to the homes under men's complete tutelage; and (3) a partially free class remaining as they were in pre-British times.

LAND TENURE.

The system of land tenure in Malabar has a very complex and confusing history. Several tomes have been written on its legal aspect, but our chief interest is not so much in the legal as in its social aspect, to which, however, scant justice has been done. The early history of land tenure is shrowded in mystery and myth. The Namputiri legends—all recent fabrications—say that their hero, Parasurama, made a gift of Kerala to the Brahmans, thereby making them the legal proprietors—*janmis*—of the soil. It is, however, a fact that to-day the richest landlords are the Brahmans. The great temples also have vast estates with ***janmi*** rights therein. At the same time there are Nayars and a few Iravas who are ***janmis.*** It was a custom in ancient Malabar for people to make gifts of land to temples and to Brahmans and hold such gifts on the profit-sharing basis of tenure. This was a device adopted not only to gain merit, but also to invest the property with the sacred seal of the god or the Brahman, to protect it from alienation by enemies in times of war and unsettlement. One of the kings of Travancore made a gift of his whole kingdom to the tutelary deity of the family and governed it as the vassal—*dāsa*—of the god. The title, vassal of Padmanabha, is still retained by the

Rajas of Travancore. By this religious fiction the clever King sought to ensure the integrity of his territory which he consolidated at the expense of several petty chiefs. It was their religious status that made the Malabar Brahmans so important economically. But the story of British maladministration and bungling in the matter of land tenure in Malabar district has a more than theoretical interest, for it has a sad moral and contains a grave warning to those who interfere carelessly in native economic organizations. No one has ever questioned the honesty and sincerity of those early British administrators who introduced catastrophic and expropriatory reforms in land tenure, under the belief that they were doing the right thing. These unconcious changes spelt the ruin of a prosperous peasantry of an agricultural land, which shows that mere good intentions, uninformed by an intelligent appreciation of the facts of the situation can seldom do any one good. The rich *janmis* grew unexpectedly richer, the cultivators' lot became proportionately miserable and full of uncertainty, agrarian unrest was everywhere in evidence, lives were lost in riots and punitive expeditions, but yet the courts continued to expropriate the peasants to fatten the *janmis*, through the mere obtuseness of the administration. The honest mistakes of half a dozen Britishers were in a large measure responsible for the very unequal distribution of wealth in Malabar and the great poverty of the agriculturists. When, after the lapse of nearly a century and a half, in response to the persistent agitation of the tenants, the Madras Legislative Council wanted to rectify the wrongs done to the peasantry, the illegal law introduced by the British had gained the respectability of custom and the Government and the *janmis* alike condemned the proposals of the representatives of the people as revolutionary and confiscatory. The Madras Tenancy Act of 1930 could in fact do very little to relieve the agriculturists.

History of Land Tenure

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In ancient Malabar the village lands were more or less under the control of the village chief or *deśavari*, a political, ~~religious~~ official and military leader, owing allegiance to the district chief and to the Raja or paramount chief, who collected no land revenue [1] but expected his subordinates to send him their quotas of militia men in times of war. The land, in theory belonged to the Raja, but the village chief and the cultivators were bound by a produce-sharing system of land tenure, in which the share of the former was never more than one third the net produce. Each of the village functionaries, like the carpenter, blacksmith and others, claimed a share from the cultivators for his service. The cultivators were also expected to make periodical feudal contributions to the village chief's household, to the village temple, etc. On predominantly agricultural communities such as the Iravas fell the responsibility of bringing waste lands under cultivation, but such improvements as they effected, gave the cultivators co-proprietary and unalienable right in the newly reclaimed land. No written or express contract was necessary in those days for any one improving

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[1] In Cochin and Travancore, when the Rajas ~~had~~ began to have standing armies and as state expenses increased, land-tax came to be levied, but in Malabar District, the Mysore Government levied it first.

When the Raja ceased to be a ruler in 1946 and later ceased to be Rajpramukh (Constitutional Governor of the State when this kind of office was abolished in 1956 under the States Reorganisation Act, the Raja is reported to have returned the sword of office to the temple of Padmanabha (Vish-

Tenants of this new class [illegible]
Kanakkar (= having Kanam [illegible] tenancy).

uncultivated land. Both the tenant and the chief could transfer their respective rights in the land. No one, except the whole village assembled in council, could evict a man from the enjoyment of his lands.

When, later, there were more of wars, and greater demand and competition among tenants for good land, it became the custom for the *janmis* to ask for lump-sum advances of the *patta-varam* (*janmis*' share) and for the tenants to pay the same, the interest on the advance being deducted from the annual instalments due to the *janmi.* When the East India Company got Malabar from Tippu, the officers of the company misunderstood the nature of this advance, regarding it as mortgage. They were also misled by the peculiar wording of *janmis*' transfer deeds, which had the appearance of giving the impression that they had sovereign rights in the soil also.

On the 28th October 1793, the British rulers of Malabar, surprised their subjects by a most unfortunate proclamation which recognised the *janmi* as the owner of the soil and the ***kāṇakkar*** as the " owner's lessee " and as such liable to be turned out of the land. The British jurists, steeped in Roman Law, made the naive presumption that the *janmis* were equivalent to the Roman *Dominus*, and the courts by a series of decisions made them such. Later " the Civil Courts began to recognize the force of contract—the western or European law—as superior to the force of custom—the eastern or Indian law. And this suppression of the unwritten native law was the final blow which ruined a system already undangered by the erroneous idea that a *janmi was really a dominus* "[1] According to the new dispensation, the *janmi* could evict a cultivator from possession of lands and gardens by paying him back the advance and the cost of improvements, even though he (the cultivator) had been in possession for generations. Under the old law a cultivator who reclaimed land had to pay a small renewal fee at the time of the succession to the *janmis*' position. These renewal fees were now made more frequent and exacting, and improvements were based strictly on contract. Thus the landlords got much power over the tenants ; for a small profit or on the slightest provocation the latter were evicted from possession. The peasant could no longer attend to his work in peace and security ; the Damocle's sword of eviction was always threatening him. In order to get the maximum benefit from improvements he crowded his plots with trees. Though his ancient rights were thus nullified, duties and obligations of a customary nature continued to be demanded of him and also included in the contract. He could be called upon to make contributions to the *janmis*' household, to the temples and for festivals, to work free for the latter place and make periodical presents to the landlord.

The social consequences of the new system of land tenure became obvious from the point of view of the Iravas, when they started on their reforming activities. They were (and are) mostly tenants, very few having *janmi* rights, as the upper castes jealously guarded such rights from passing to the lower castes. As soon as an Irava pitted himself against his

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[1] Logan, *op. cit.* p. 610.

landlord, he found that he had to relinquish not only his gardens and fields but even his homestead. The dependence of the Iravas on their land being great they could not, therefore, afford to displease the landlord. This checked their efforts for emancipation to a very considerable extent.

The Nayar and Moplah tenants suffered equally, especially in Central Kerala where there were rich Namputri *janmis*. While Hindu tenants were passive in their suffering the Moplahs were less submissive. The Moplah riots, which recurred frequently, were due to the oppression and exaction of landlords. The Moplahs regarded it 'no sin, but a merit to kill a *janmi* who evicts.' Peace and solidarity of the village life, thus, disappeared once for all in the face of the greed of the landlords and land-grabbers. Litigation grew in volume and all possible misuse was made of the courts. The *janmis*, however, secure in their position of advantage, with the British law to support them, had gained also influence with the Government. It took nearly 137 years after the first promulgation of the expropriatory proclamation for the Madras Legislative Council to pass in the teeth of Government opposition the Malabar Tenancy Act, which (1) gave the tenant security of tenure for the ***kutiyiruppu***, ***i.e.***, the plot on which he had his house built and (2) fixed the rate of renewal fees. The renewal of the agreements which has to be repeated every twelve years is costly, though the amounts have been fixed by law. As there is scarcity of land, the rent to be paid for even simple lease is ever on the increase, resulting in the cultivator being able to get a precarious margin of profit just enabling him to be nominally a free labourer.

In Travancore, the fixity of tenure of the ***kanam*** tenancy was confirmed by a Royal proclamation in the year 1867 before the landlords had time to get the customary law twisted in their favour. In the sections dealing with social reform movements (page) it will be noticed that the Iravas of Travancore led the other Iravas in all vital matters, and they maintained this position of importance in industries too. The wise administration of the law relating to land must have had its share in enabling the Iravas of Travancore to fight better for their social rights than their fellows in other places, without the fear of being punished by the higher caste Hindus with economic sanctions.

GAINS AND LOSSES DUE TO CULTURE CHANGE.

Malabar villages are no longer isolated, but have been linked to the international markets. Even in little shops in hamlets goods from Japan and Germany and England can be seen. Villagers watch with anxiety the fluctuations in the price of copra, coconut oil, rice, pepper etc., and the vernacular newspapers carry trade news of the world to their bazaars and shops and homes. The village artisans have been hard hit by the import of manufactured goods. The country boats and carts have been affected by the motor buses and motor boats. The word "competition" has been adapted as a Malayalam word by use among the bus men.

There are no modern activities in which the Iravas do not interest themselves, from spiritualism to communism, from paddling canoes to aeronautics and scientific researches. With Hunter one might say that " the so-called stationary stage " in Malabar " has disappeared ".[1]

To summarise the effects of such a vast series of changes is a difficult task. I may set them down as a balance sheet of gains and losses from the Irava point of view :—

Gains.	Losses.
New food materials, emigration	Overpopulation.
Industries connected with coconut, cashew nut, etc.	State monopoly of toddy and arrack.
Capitalistic enterprises, weaving, tile factories, saw-mills.	Hand-loom weaving of the Southern Iravas suffered from competition.
Retail trade	Landlordism strengthened (in British Malabar District).
Better sanitation	Physical degeneration.
Foreign goods	Disappearance of native arts.
Rise in the standard of life	Neglect of ceremonies.
Competition	Reduction of co-operation in family and kinship and caste groups.
Faster means of communication	Boatmen and cartmen thrown out of work.
Learned professions	Withdrawal of women from productive outdoor work.

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[1] *England's Work in India.*

CHAPTER VI—EDUCATION.

THE PRE-BRITISH SYSTEM.

My purpose in this chapter is to examine the manner in which the old indigenous system of education gave place to the modern English system and how the latter acts in the sociology of culture change. The organization of modern educational work in India is discussed in detail in many treatises and does not call for any re-statement here. But so little has been written of the old educational methods in Malabar that I shall start with an account of the educational system as it was, basing it on what used to be done a quarter of a century ago, before the old kind of schools completely disappeared. The old type of ***Aśan*** (teacher) is still found in some villages, wondering at the changes that have come over the methods, paraphernalia, and ideals of education. The respect that these old teachers command from their disciples, who are themselves old men now, and the terrific stories of pedagogic torture which they narrate, are such as cannot fail to impress the modern.

Except among the poorest, a boy at the age of five or six was " put to letters ", *i.e.*, his education was formally begun on the " day for beginning of education " after the " worship of books and tools " in the month *Kanni* (September and October). The teacher for the Iravas was the Kaniyan (the astrologer). He would write the Sanskrit line for " Salutation to Vishnu, Sri and Ganapati " on the tongue of the boy with a piece of gold and make him write the same in Malayalam, his mother-tongue, on rice in a bell-metal plate. After this the boy would attend the " school " run by the Kaniyan on his own verandah or in a " writing house ", a small thatched shed, where the children would be taught by himself or his wife. Squatting on the floor on small mats, they used to spread some fine sand in front and practise writing on the sand with the index finger. The letters of the alphabet are inscribed on palm leaves. When the fifty-one letters of the alphabet have been mastered, the parents of the pupil would distribute sugar and coconuts to the teacher and school-fellows of the boy. Then began the study of compound letters and numbers, after which the small feast would be repeated. Then the boy practised writing on palm leaf with the iron style. This usually took a year. Then commenced the learning by rote of devotional verses[1] ; simple Sanskrit verses belonging to an anthology known as " the Essence of Law[2] " ;

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[1] A sample of the devotional verses would read as follows :—" Oh, Lord, who dwells on the . . . hill, oh Hari, Govinda, you became a tortoise and lifted up the mountain that sank."

[2] The " Essence of Law " dealt with all manner of subjects, such as ethics, hygiene, food regulations, wordly wisdom and etiquette. A few examples are :

(*a*) " If you plant a *neem* tree in a bed of sugar and water it with milk, it will not lose its bitterness. So the evil nature of a bad man."

(*b*) " A woman must be like a minister in business, like a servant in work, like the earth in patience, like a prostitute in bed (i.e., sexual intercourse)."

(*c*) " Exposing yourself to the sun in the morning, eating curds in the night, and sleeping with an old woman, will shorten the span of life."

or agricultural lore in verse,[1] describing the kind of seeds, and the proper time for sowing, the ways of manuring and regulating the water, etc.; and girls, instead of the above, had dance songs, and songs calculated to make them chaste wives.

The most popular of the songs that used to be taught to little girls were : (1) the song of King Mahabali who ruled Malabar during its golden age, " when men were all alike, when there were no false measures, no theft ", who was deceived and killed by Vishnu, and whom the people of Malabar welcome during the harvest festival, *Onam*[2], in August-September. Another was the story of *Sīlavati*, the devoted wife of a tyrannical sage, who put her devotion to severe tests, even to the extent of asking her to carry him on her shoulders (he was too weak to walk) to a prostitute's house. She was still obedient and true. So chaste was she that at her command the sun did not rise for three days and the whole world was plunged in darkness. As a reward for her constancy, she was re-born after her death as a princess, and became the wife of the five brothers, the heroes of the Mahabharata. To the ideal wife[3] her husband was like a god.

It will be noted that this education had a direct bearing on the cultural and economic environment in which the children grew up. Reverence for their gods, parents, and the established norms of conduct for man and woman was inculcated. The teacher himself was regarded with religious awe. He would be saluted every day by the pupils respectfully bowing low and touching his feet. The rod was never spared and punishment was severe. Offerings made secretly to some deity to cause the early death of a teacher, simple magical rites to make the sun set quickly to enable them to go home earlier, were the types of school-boy stories of the older generation. The teacher was given gifts in addition to his fees on every festive day and his blessing or curse was believed to be veryeffective. For the Irava students this Kaniyan teacher, transmitting the rudiments of Hindu culture, was an important link with the culture of the upper castes. Devoting his full time for the study of Sanskrit (at least the non-esoteric part of it that the lower castes could be permitted to study) he imbibed more of the Hindu culture than others of the group B castes. The non-Brahman castes learnt Sanskrit in spite of the difficulties placed in the way of their acquiring proficiency in it. The fight against Brahman monopoly of learning is not new, but a very old, though slow, process.[4] So gradual was the process of infiltration of knowledge that it could not decrease the stability of Hindu society in Malabar, but on the other hand, strengthened it by increasing the regard for the Brahman and the Brahmanical religion and gods. The education provided by the hereditary village teachers did not have the object of

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[1] " Song of Agriculture " comprises vast agricultural knowledge :

The variety of rice seed known as *punja*, in ever wet soil, will enable you to take three crops a year.

If you sow *kuttanadan* seed, no ear will come for eight months.

[2] For detailed description see Gopal Panikkar, *Malabar and its Folk*.

[3] Modern women of Malabar condemn Silavati as a foolish and invertebrate wife. To them she is no longer the ideal that she was to their mothers.

[4] This again shows that the British rule only hastened a slow change.

producing learned men or professionals, but dutiful members of the community. Education was thus training for "citizenship."

It should not be thought that the technical lore possessed by the Malabar villagers was small. There units of time and length are still the same ones used in the villages, where the corresponding English units have not yet reached. Time was calculated by measuring the shadow or observing the stars. Even young girls knew how to do so. Weights and measures in the bazaars are now changed, but in villages abrus seeds for small weights and the wooden "steel-yard" are still popular. The younger generation, without their watches are helpless, especially at night to know the time, but not so the old villagers. The latter learn the English method of reckoning time from their own children. The year was divided for agricultural purposes into twenty-eight agricultural periods, each with its appropriate activities. Now for official purposes, even old men have to accustom themselves to the use of English months and the Christian Era, their own calendar being no longer used officially. In agriculture, except in the matter of controlling pests, modern science has been of little use to them, their own knowledge in its other aspects being considerable. The high achievement of the people of Malabar, especially the Iravas, in the field of medicine is still more remarkable. Based on what is regarded as a crude theory of three humours, the system of indigenous medicine, with its marvellous drugs deserves its continuance and not the ridicule that it has been receiving all these years.

The effectiveness of the indigenous system of education consisted in its being practical, grounded in religion, and related to all aspects of life. To illustrate the point let us look at the way in which hygiene was taught. There was an annual day of ceremonial cleaning. The belief behind the ceremonial is that "Prosperity" and "Unprosperity" are two sisters, one dwelling where there are light and cleanliness, and the other where these are absent. Annually all dirt and cobwebs are cleaned and removed. On the filth thus removed are placed a few turmeric roots and charcoal for the goddess to use. The goddess of prosperity is then invited to enter the house by lighting and showing lamps in all parts of the house. In addition to dirt there is a long list of places and animals and inanimate objects, to which the goddess of unprosperity will cling, such as unswept corners, places where menstruating women remain, thieves, evil-minded persons, persons who do not love their parents, people who sleep after sunrise or at sunset, drunkards, those who "sleep on the teacher's bed" (*i.e.*, have sexual intercourse with the teacher's wife), those who dishonour learned men, ungrateful men, liars, promise breakers, gluttons, and all dirty men. If a father sees that the house is not swept and cleaned, his usual remark will be, "Look how dirty it is! Jyeshtha* will never leave this place."

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* Jyesthā is the goddess of filth, etc. A very dirty, mean looking woman is abused by calling her by this name of the goddess.

Higher education and specialisation beyond the general stage described above used to be the privilege of a few boys who were favourably situated. There was no formal education beyond the elementary stage for girls.

If a boy was specially promising he used to be allowed to study a few years more, going to the teacher during his free hours after his daily work, or he was sent to learn medicine from a well-known practitioner. The pupil would live with the teacher, eat and work in his house, as though he were a member of the family, and when he had learnt enough, would finally take leave of his teacher. The only kind of payment was the gifts made to the teacher as tokens of affection rather than as remuneration for teaching. Fencing and other forms of manly activities were extremely popular and teachers had *Kalaris* which roughly resembled modern institutions for training specialists. The same reverential atmosphere prevailed there also, and no lessons would begin without the invocation of the gods and the touching of the feet of the teachers.[1]

Even while they were at school, the informal education of the home would be going on. If the father wanted the son to be a toddy tapper, he would try tree climbing earlier and with greater vigour than other boys. By observation and listening to the conversation of elders, he would have learnt all the theoretical and practical details. Then later, with his father, he would go up the tree and watch him at work till he would be able to experiment on small trees. In agriculture also, in the same informal, natural manner, the boy would participate in such simple jobs as feeding, grazing, and washing the cattle ; then he would try his hand at ploughing in joke, the older folks laughing at his mistakes and correcting him. No distinction was thus made between work and play at this stage. This method of acquiring knowledge might look as if it would lead to dead standardization, but the individual genius was never completely stamped out. It used to be common to describe a person as a " good tapper " or as a " first class farmer, " success being ascribed only in part to luck, but mostly to industry, intelligence and skill.

CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE ENW SYSTEMS.

After the historic controversy on the method and goal of Indian education, in which Macaulay condemned Hindu culture whole sale, the issue was decided in favour of creating " a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." Years before this, however, missionaries had begun their educative work, not with the only object of educating the natives, but for the progress of Christianity. English instead of Persian became the official language of India, and a knowledge of English became a practical necessity for all. For the narrow object of qualifying for work under the Government, and for the equally limited object of evangelisation, a multitude of schools sprang up in

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[1] As an item in nationalistic revival, these old fencing schools in Malabar are being revived. The best circus men in India are those from N. Malabar and a majority of them, Iravas.

the bigger towns, and then in the bigger villages. The old village schools continued side by side with them for a time. Some boys spent a few years in the old schools and when they were big enough to leave home or walk long distances, joined the English schools. The prosperity in after life of those who studied in English schools induced others also to join them. The contrast between the old schools and the new ones was indeed great, and a catalogue of them will be of interest.

Tabular statement of the points of difference between the old and the new schools in Malabar.

	Old Schools.	New Schools.
Buildings	Mere sheds or verandahs of houses.	Larger buildings in central places.
Furniture etc.	Mats for the children to sit on (as in the homes).	Tables, chairs, benches, almirahs, bells.
Teaching apparatus ...	Palm-leaf for paper, sand for slates, writing styles.	All modern paraphernalia.
Dress	Loin-cloth (as at home) ...	Shirt, coat, cap, etc., in addition to the loin-cloth. The former for school use only.
Teachers	Hereditary, of special castes only.	Non-hereditary. Of all castes. Less venerated by the pupils.
Social conditions	Exclusive schools for Brahmans. Exclusive schools for Nayars and allied non-Brahman castes. Separate schools for B. group castes. None for the C. group castes. The observance of caste practices insisted on.	Cosmopolitan. Caste observances neglected, and also discouraged.
Subjects	Limited, but practical. Ethics, astrology, religion, economic lore.	Wide range of subjects, but theoretical and divorced from the life of the villages.
Languages	Mainly the mother-tongue and Sanskrit for the few who went for advanced studies in native medicine or astrology.	Bilingualism in Schools. Much time wasted on English, but the study of the latter a condition for all the better appointments.
Competition	Very little	Encouraged.

The contrast between the home, and the new school is also brought out in the above table. A boy who is accustomed to squat on a mat at home is to sit on a wooden bench, and the teacher, whose domestic furniture is the same as the boys, on a chair. From the

schools, the habit of sitting on benches spread to shops, taverns and to homes. Again in the matter of dress, schools set a new norm of putting on a shirt and sometimes a cap for boys and blouses for girls. We have already seen in a previous chapter how caste prejudice began to weaken in modern schools when a cosmopolitan crowd of boys, girls and teachers of all classes congregated. The missionary schools actively discouraged any show of caste prejudices. By dethroning Sanskrit from its high position and giving its place to English, a rift was made between the old and the new kinds of scholarship, but a wide world was opened to the person who knew English. Dozens of English words came to be borrowed into the Malayalam. The early study of English and also the mother-tongue led to bilingualism and the confusion in thought and expression, which it is believed to create. To be able to understand and talk a few words of English became a matter of pride, the hallmark of a gentleman. The schools, thus, were from the very beginning, not only the breeding grounds of a new group of English-knowing public servants and professional classes, but were centres from which the tendency to use new cultural objects spread, where new democratic ideas originated, and men learned to make better use of the new institutions introduced by the British.[1]

The new norms do clash with the older ones. In the life of an individual himself it means great disruptive changes. At home as a boy, he is as a rule in an element steeped in caste ; there he is asked to unlearn several things he has learnt at school. If he is a student in a missionary school, where scripture is taught every day, he is at war with his parents on their beliefs. He can no longer with sincere belief and interest partake in most of the domestic rituals. His father does not put on a shirt, sit on a chair, or read English books, but the son does all these and is tempted to regard himself as a superior person. In intercaste relationship he behaves more freely and on more equal terms with men of both superior and inferior castes. Later on, in marriage, he wants to chose his bride, satisfy himself about her personal appearance, instead of leaving these matters entirely in the hands of the father. He wants that his sisters should cast away old fashioned ornaments and have modern ones, that his mother should not go about with her breasts exposed as she used to do earlier, and that his wife and sisters should be draped in *saris*, instead of loin cloths. Every family in Malabar is passing or has passed through these clashing norms, in which the younger generation naturally wins. It does not require statistical help to see that the acceptance of most of these new norms means a rise in the general standard of life. To the old generation, Malabar was their whole world, outside which there were just a few places for pilgrimage. I asked a grand old woman Chiruta of Mananteri to give me her considered opinion on the changes that have come over the Iravas of her locality. Her reply, after a moment's reflection, was, " Physically they have gone down. You can no longer see the

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[1] In some schools children were taught by practical-minded teachers to draft promissory notes and petitions.

[1] Tamil dress that is being copied by all castes of Malabar.

strong healthy youths who had frames of iron. But in other respects we have improved, economically, hygienically, and in intelligence. Oh, the people of old were so dull." She would be right, if we substitute " knowledge of affairs " for " intelligence."

If we eliminate a few Government and local board schools, most of the remaining schools are run by Christians, either native or foreign. The first effect of the Christian teaching on Hindu religion was devastating. The early intellectuals in Malabar as in other place of India were, a good many of them, pro-Christian. One method of Christian attack on Hinduism was holding to ridicule the gods of the Hindus. The criticism of the missionaries led the Hindus, in course of time, to formulate their faith anew in clearer and more modern terms, which constituted the Neo-Hinduism preached by Vivekananda. The missionaries, therefore, exerted a salutary influence on Hinduism through their criticism. They, it must be added, were able to convert into Christianity some individuals who were convinced of its superiority to the Hinduism that they were acquainted with. No wonder that many of the early converts were Irava students in missionary colleges and schools, to whom the oppressiveness of caste and the democracy of Christianity must have presented impressive contrasts.

Missionary teaching and the spread of the knowledge of English led to the great and rapid development of Malayalam literature. The first printing press in Malabar was introduced by missionaries and the first printed book in Malayalam was the Bible. The first good dictionary of the language was compiled by an enterprising German missionary. The printing of cheap editions of the sacred books of the Hindu commonality, viz., their epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, brought them to even the poorest homes and developed in them a taste for reading. Formerly, only the few rich had the palm-leaf books which were preserved as heirlooms. Again, the first newspaper was that of Christians. These early newspapers, were " not merely chronicles of sensational events," but were " viewspapers," and had an important part in awakening political and social consciousness. The missionary efforts in journalism and political education were imitated by others and the Iravas also came to have their own communal newspapers and a few schools run by themselves. In this way, knowledge which was the monopoly of the Brahmans—and among them only of an aristocracy—passed into the hands of the common people.

Fifty years ago no Brahman would have taught Sanskrit to an Irava. In villages, even now, old-fashioned Brahmans are shocked when they hear Iravas reciting Sanskrit verses. But in modern Sanskrit colleges, under Government management, Irava students study whatever they want to learn though, there also, the Brahmans' prejudice against a non-Brahman studying higher specialisms, such as advanced logic, is not quite dead. In some Native States, there are State schools for teaching Sanskrit to Brahmans and others where Irava students are not yet admitted.

The growing acquaintance with English literature profoundly influenced literary methods of native writers. For centuries Malayalam writers were imitating Sanskrit poets, copying their metaphors and methods, and the themes were almost without exception from the epics. There was no creative thought in either prose or poetry. The poetry of an Indian language cannot copy the style and structure of that of English because of the limitations of their conventions and traditions. The poets of Malabar (as of other parts of India) depend for their poetic effect on ornate and effective use of words. Vivid descriptions and the picturing of emotions without word-effects fail to impress a reader of Malayalam poetry. What happened in Malayalam literature under English influence was that poetry began to be made more a criticism of life and a channel for the expression of noble emotions, while the form and technique remained indigenous. Since poetry is a more fundamental part of culture, its changeability is, as we have just seen, quite limited. But in prose literature, the novel, the essay, and the short story were borrowed wholesale. It was given to an Irava poet to establish his reputation as the first great lyrical poet of Malabar, who approximated as closely as it was possible to the English standards in poetry. This great poet, Kumaran Asan, broke off from old poetical traditions of writing on mythical themes, and wrote on subjects garnered from his own experience. Because it was the Iravas who led the revolt against Hindu traditions in Malabar, the fact that an Irava poet led the revolt against the old poetical conventions may not be quite a chance occurrence. If one may venture to evaluate changes in this field, it may safely be said that Malayalam literature gained considerably by its contact with English. Literature seems to be a department of culture where contacts mean mostly gains and few losses.

GAMES.

Organized games introduced in most High Schools with a view not only to improve the body, but also to inculcate discipline and team spirit, were another entirely new educational contribution of the English. Games there were in Malabar for boys and girls, but they had the rather narrow object of providing amusement and exercise. The ***kārakali*** is exactly like hockey, but played in a lawless and crude manner, with little organization in the teams. The games of " beating the ball " and " ***talappantu*** " were played during the ***onam*** season with as much enthusiasm as people play cricket in England. The boat races of Malabar are hardly less exciting than those on the Thames. But the significant point is that organization and discipline which distinguish English sports were absent here. It yet remains to be seen how far the sporting spirit is capable of being acquired by the people of Malabar. Many of the old games are losing their hold on the children. School-going children no longer interest themselves in the music of the " onam bow " (a bow with a thin bamboo for its string which produces a twang when beaten on). The Malabar variety of boxing with naked palms (" beating ") which used to provide great amusement is almost forgotten, but there are chances

of its being revived. Men have ceased to interest themselves in dances. The " dance of the five "[1] performed at night round a burning lamp is being forgotten. Another dance on its way to disappearance is " the play of knocking shields "[2] in which all the dancers have small shields on their left arm. In the place of all these the sedentary game of cards has invaded the villages, to their detriment. The physical inertia due to the loss of interest in manly games has been chiefly responsible for the physical degeneration of the Iravas (p.). Self-defence before the establishment of Pax Britannica demanded of everyone scrupulous attention to muscular vigour, but now it appears to have become a luxury.

It is interesting to observe in passing that children invent new games which reflect culture change, *e.g.*, boys have a new game called " playing at thief and magistrate." A boy acts as the judge, others as thief, policeman, village headman and his peon. The thief is caught and sentenced to be whipped. The courts are one of the sensational innovations introduced by the English, and their imitation in child-play is not therefore surprising.

Modern education has cleaved society in Malabar into two halves, one, the English-educated minority, who are the transmitters of English standards and norms, and the other, the older unemancipated people, still more or less under the spell of the old culture, but being powerfully drawn towards the first. On the whole, to the Iravas modern education has been a great liberating force.

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[1] *Aivarkali.*

[2] *Palis'amutti-kali.*

CHAPTER VII—MAGIC, RELIGION, AND RITUAL.

MAGICO-RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA.

The study of magico-religious phenomena in the changing culture of the Iravas is best begun by actually observing some of the obvious phases that catch the eye of the ethnographer, and by listening to some native remarks about them. In village M . . . we saw that there is a mother-goddess temple, which is the village temple, and another, belonging to one of the Irava clans where the goddess Kali, the monkey god Hanuman, and the goddess Mariamman are worshipped. Near by the temple is a grove of stately trees, especially *Alstonia scholaris* and the white and yellow flowered oleander, under which are ***chitrakūta-kallu*** of granite shaped like houses, in which are placed figures of serpents that are paid ritual honours every year. In addition to these public or semi-public places of worship almost every ramage in the village has a small domestic shrine or "temple-house" in which the bronze icons representing family deities, ancestral spitrits, etc., are kept; such families as are too poor to have a "temple-house" set apart one of the best rooms in the house for the same purpose. They have similarly the ***sarpa-kāvu*** (serpent grove) and in addition, crude slabs of laterite placed under trees (as in plate ii, fig. 3). On these laterite slabs, spitrits are "housed". There is sanctity and awe surrounding all these places; they are kept clean and unpolluted; people are afraid of going near them late in the night and children contract the same kind of fear in an exaggerated form.

If you ask the old men of the village some questions about the temple and the goddess enshrined therein they would reply: "It is a powerful ***Tampuratti*** ('lady': this term is used in ordinary language to mean a woman of rank especially of high caste); not at all evil; those fellows, the managers of the temple ate her wealth and now she has ruined them all. She protects this village and the festival in the month of ***Minam*** (March-April) which we celebrate is quite grand. For the procession carrying the image of the goddess, we have at least three elephants." The temple and the goddess mean much to the villagers. "My mother, Tampuratti, protect me." is the simple prayer that the men and women utter standing in front of the temple—near it if they are of the higher castes, at a distance if they are of the lower castes—joining their palms on the chest or in the front of the face. They make periodical offerings of money, rice, etc., for "lighting the lamp," or for "sweet pudding" to be offered to the deity, or for "garlands" to be put on the image. A part of what is offered is returned to them and is known as ***prasadam***.

To see other manifestations of belief in the supernatural, a more thorough search is necessary. Children are often found to have amulets strung on their waist-thread, or cotton strings with several knots round their neck or wrist. "It is a string tied with spells." As one passes along village lanes that are not frequented one may occasionally find a square framework made of the glossy leaf-sheaths of the banana tree with pieces of the young leaves of the

coconut tree cut in the form of feathered arrows, stuck into it in three or four lows. This is known as *bali*. Smaller triangular frames are known as *kaipandi*. Thrown with the *bali* may be seen red flowers, half-burnt cotton wicks, rice in various forms smeared with the blood of cocks sacrificed. Every one except the youngest children avoids these things. By the care with which they avoid them, and ask the children also to do so shows that there is something uncanny about these carelessly thrown refuse. They are the relics of *mantravāda*, you will be told, and it is safer to avoid them, as some thing evil might be lurking in the *bali*. A small boy who knew of my interest in wood carvings brought to me a crude figure of a human being riddled with nails, which he picked up from the adjoining field ; while we were both engaged in cleaning it of the mud, an old Irava rushed to us saying, " Throw it away. I saw it in the mud a week ago, but dared not touch it. It is not good to have it. It must have been used for '*śūnyam*' (destructive magic)."

In the course of a discussion with a villager on the power of *mantras* (spells), he told me, " Have you not heard of the aeroplane in which the god Rama carried his wife back to his city after killing the demon who abducted her ? This aeroplane had no engine, but was going under the influence of spells. It came down and went up at the mere will of the occupants. What the white men do with their machines, in ancient India they used to do by the great spells."

Another old man's arguments were more interesting. " Why should there be a fire," he asked, " always kept burning in the railway engine ? It is the devil that the whitemen worship that makes the train go, and the fire is the " *homa* " or sacrificial fire."

These two old men belong to a generation that is fast disappearing. With the introduction of the motor car the mechanism of which is well understood by hundreds, machines have ceased to be regarded with magical associations.

The activities of some ghosts accasionally convulse the whole village with fear. A few years ago a Kanarese Brahman in village M . . died suddenly, and as he was far from his home, he could not be cremated with the proper rites. His body was burnt in the compound adjoining the temple. A few days after this an Irava woman who was passing through the compound at dusk was heard to shriek and began to dance in terror, possessed, as the villagers thought, by the spirit of the Brahman, and soon she fell ill and had to be treated by a *mantravadi* (practitioner of spells). In house No. 58 a young woman suddenly got fever. The previous evening, she had been to bathe in the tank (2), and when coming out from the water after immersing herself in, she felt that something flitted past her. The village astrologer was, as usual, consulted. It was again the "*pretam*" (ghost) of the Brahman. All the villagers began to take precautionary measures against the visitations of the troublesome ghost. People avoided going through the compound at noon and after dusk if they could help it, and these who had to go, carried torches, or knives, and they seldom went alone. At noon, at dusk, and at midnight spirits are believed to be active. Iron scares away spirits ; the Malayalam

expression, " like a spirit that saw iron " has its origin from this belief. The wife of the village carpenter had an ingenious way of her own for keeping the Brahman's ghost from her house and its environs ; she kept pieces of salted fish over the entrances to her house. The Brahman, when alive, shared the disgust that his caste-men have for salted fish which has to the vegetarians an unpleasant odour ; the Brahman's ghost should have a similar disgust for fish and so, avoid going near the house. When what she had done in secret came to be known to the villagers, it caused them amusement, because it was an original idea, not a traditional one. Some other villagers living near the compound where the cremation took place, " housed" the ghost by placing a laterite slab under a tree keeping the spot clean, and lighting a brass lamp every evening near it for a short time. This, they expected, would keep the ghost from wandering and from pestering those that honoured it and provided it a light. The second of the two women " affected " by the ghost was very ill and as her father was a man of some means, he got a powerful and skilled " practitioner of spells " from a distant village paying him a heavy fee, and after a series of rituals, he " removed " the ghost, made it " take an oath" not to pester the girl, and then imprisoning it in an earthenware pot, carried it to his place where he provided it a " house " so that it would not be " polluted or be without light."

In the section on the social organization of the Iravas (p) we have already seen that there is some division of labour for ritual purposes ; the direction and supervision of deathrituals is the function of a subordinate sub-caste, Vatti ; the Inangan functions as a ritualist for the particular households to which is bound by mutual bond-friendship ; ritual purification and shamanistic dances and songs are specialised in by the caste of washermen. In most of the Irava shrines, there are no full-time priests, but the head of the clan to which the temple belongs acts as the priest on ceremonial occasions, and either he or some close relative who has been found fit for the work acts as the *komaram*[1] (*i.e.*, the person on whom the spirit " climbs ") or *velichapādu* (" he through whom the god or spirit appears "). If I were celebrating a ritual in honour of the sacred serpents in my family shrine I invite a serpent ritualist of the Pulluvan caste, who with his wife sings the " serpent songs", draws the figures of the serpents in green, red, yellow and black ; my sister or some other close female relative, after observing ritual tabus, etc., is seated on one side of the figures facing the Pulluvan, who by his songs and by the noise produced by his musical instruments, induces the serpent spirits to " come in her body ", to speak through her, and accept the offerings and say if " thirst is slaked." In the serpent spiritual, we see a hereditary ritualist or priest, and an *ad hoc* shamaness belonging to the family on whose behalf the rites are performed. While the Pulluvan specialises in the serpent cult the Vannan, we saw, is the specialist in the cult of the Mother-goddess, but to

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[1] The use of the term 'shaman' for a *komaram* is not strictly correct, but it is convenient to do so. Seligman in his *Veddahs* has used the word in the same sense as I do here.

act the part of the shaman, in most cases, is left to the householders conducting the ceremonies, the Vannan only supplementing their activities by his own dances. From this brief survey, it will be seen that for a few complex rituals, hereditary castes of ritualists have arisen, whereas for simpler rites as such as offerings to one's own ancestors, the necessity does not exist for such specialists. Specialisation is directly proportional to the complexity of the rituals.

Among the non-hereditary professions followed by the Iravas, *mantravāda* or "the practice of spells" is usually included. Some medical men have the "practice of spells" as a subsidiary profession as the two go together, and it is not at all uncommon for a patient to be treated by a medical man and a "practitioner of spells" simultaneously. A great specialist in spells when he establishes his name gets his clients from far and near, and enjoys as much prestige as a good doctor, but he is more feared because of the mystic power that he has. Armed with his occult powers he inspires uneasiness and terror in the minds of his neighbours. And there is a belief that a practitioner of spells will seldom be able to enjoy his wealth, because his trade is frought with risks. Several apprentices learning spells under reputed teachers are said to have gone mad during the period of training ; others have lost their near and dear ones due to the anger of the spirits they had to encounter. On the whole, society is not disposed to be enthusiastic in its encouragement of the profession of magic though it is useful.

While the rites falling within the sphere of *mantravada* are clearly delimited by the use of this term, the remaining ones, which constitute the majority in number, are not so easily and clearly labelled as a class. They are by some referred to as *adiyantarannal*, *i.e.*, activities that are urgent and inevitable. The word *adiyantaram* is also used in ordinary conversation to mean anything urgent, though it be non-ritual. Rituals to be classed as *adivantarannal* should be public ceremonies, most often accompanied by feasts also. The special names of each of these rituals describe either the nature of the activity, or are merely the dominant elements in them. Death rites are known as *śesha-kriya* (after-death rites) ; offerings to ancestors, as *muttappan-kalaśam* (pot of toddy for the grandfather), or *vītu-vekkal* (giving a share) ; and the annual festivities in temples, by the name of the astrological days on which they are celebrated. The rites that are within the purview of *mantravada* are named with reference to the object with which they are conducted, such as "attraction", "stupefaction", "killing", "driving away (evil spirits)", "causing hate" or "establishing peace". *Mantravada* rites are rites performed by a specialist on behalf or for his client for some definite purposes, while the remaining rituals are more of the nature of inevitable and urgent duties dictated by tradition, and a sense of devotion, fear and friendship.

SPIRITS AND THEIR CONTROL.

In all the rituals referred to above, whether of the special *mantravada* category or the general one, the belief in supernatural beings is basic. These spiritual beings share all the

characteristics, sociological and psychological, of their human worshippers, such as their caste system, their standard of honesty, greed, irritability, etc. The higher and greater gods are all heroes of the Puranic (mythic) tales, and the lesser ones, either local heroes, or the ancestors of the various households. Spirits of the lower castes are attributed with mean mentality and disregard for truth. Most of the serious maladies are believed to be due to the activity of one or other of the myriads of spirits that fill the air, water, glades, trees, burial places, etc. The number of gods known to each individual is usually an infinitesimal part of the total, but the actual number that he chooses to pay special attention to is still smaller, depending on the tradition of his family and his need. Sometimes a pestering spirit may have to be housed and worshipped, as we saw above. A man usually has occasion to deal with about a dozen of these spiritual beings, among whom will be the god of the village temple, the special god of his clan, one or two ancestral spirits and a couple of serpent spirits.

The spirits that are specially worshipped are " housed ", some in the manner that we have already seen, and others have temples built in which bronze icons representing them are placed. Those that cannot afford to have bronze images place ***pīthams*** (low stools) where they should have the images. The mother-goddesses are represented in some shrines by bronze mirrors. Offering of food, the blood of cocks and sometimes of goats, and of toddy, and the shaman's performance through whom he blesses his " children " are the chief items in the ritual for the ***muttappan*** (" grandfather "). Most of the minor deities have similar rituals. In the larger temples of the Iravas, the offerings are more elaborate, and more cocks are sacrificed : the Vannan or other ritualist sings the ***torrams*** (songs describing the deity and narrating its history which rouse the deity to activity)[1], and dances round the coloured drawings on the floor with lighted torches of cotton rags dipped in oil ; and finally, the Irava shaman dances and goes in procession with the music of the Pana and Vannan band, the procession path being lined on either side by young women carrying lighted *tālams* (bell-metal plates decorated with the inflorescence of the areca palm, with a large cotton wick soaked in oil and placed in a half coconut). The music, the rows of lighted wicks, the large cotton torches that blaze up, the shaman's shouts and shrieks, etc., produce a religious as well as aesthetic fervour in the mind of the faithful crowd that keep awake the whole night to witness the show. The

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[1] A specimen of the ritual song in honour of Gulikan one of the most fearful of the spirits who brings about death and destruction is given in trasnlation :

Born in the south, body growing to the north,
Who is the god's good father, the sun is his good father.
The fire is the god's mother.
When delivered he was tall to the sky.
Tongue like a plough-share, tooth like an axe, . . .

In the song is described how goddess Parvati was terrified when she saw Gulikan, who at once " got on her chest " *i.e.*, possessed her. Her husband the great god Siva scared Gulika away from the world and from his work of killing people, which led to the overpopulation of the world and to the inurnment of old men alive. He was brought back to the world of his work by the austerities of a Malaya (the Pana of N. Malabar who specialise in Gulikan rites) who cut his finger to force the God out of his hiding place in the nether world. That is why the fell god obeys the command of even a child of the Malaya caste.

young women carrying *talams* do so in fulfilment of vows made when ill. Most of the cocks that are sacrificed are again similar offerings of thanksgiving. The non-ritual dances (" the play of the five ", " stick-play ", etc.) are organized and the expenses met by individuals as they hope to get religious merit for their troubles. The shaman's *kalpana* (" orders "), in which he talks to the important persons among the villagers assuring them of the deitie's protection in all their troubles, is the last of the series of important events.

The "practitioner of spells," as an ordinary villager, has his share in all the common religious and social activities, but he stands in closer and more intimate relationship with one at least of the many deities that are pressed into the service of his profession. The " practitioner of spells " and his deity, usually known as his ***mūrti*** or ***ishta devata***, are linked to each other by a mystic tie the creation of which is the most difficult part of the training that he undergoes. The probationer seeks a teacher, works under his direction and learns the technique of the rituals, and the spells. But mere knowledge of the spell is not enough ; he should possess mastery over it, and the method of gaining it depends on the kind of deity for getting whom as his spirit-familiar the probationer aspires. To acquire Nili, a terrible female spirit as the ***murti***, the probationer goes to the top of the Kalladikkodu hill in the Western Ghats, an inaccessible and terrible place infested with wild beasts, and there sitting on one of the granite rocks by the side of the tank known as Nili's tank, he mutters the spell used in the invocation of Nili :

> ***Om*** : Great teacher, pearl of the eye, Mercy, Nili, Kali, let me be united with you in one form. Come into my consciousness, and on to my tongue in the proper manner. O great mistress of metres, brought up by the blood-smeared creator, come, come, Kali, let freedom come to me. ***Om***. Power ! ***Hrim***. Kali. ***Saum***. I salute you, Nili, you who are armed with the trident.

The spell has to be repeated several thousands of times till the goddess appears to him in person or at least he dreams that she appeared to him.

In the case of another powerful spirit, believed to be the ghost of a Paraya, named Parakkutti (" child of a Paraya "), the probationer sits on the carcass of a buffalo, as the spirit who belonged to a carrion-eating caste would be sure to be attracted to it. For winning the goddess "Kali of the cemetery" the probationer repairs to a burial ground and sits on a new grave or digs up a corpse and sits on it uttering the spell. With a spirit-ridden traditional background, to be in a burial ground at the dead of night is itself a maddening feat, but to sit on a grave or a corpse requires superhuman strength of mind. The milder deities do not require such severe tests of courage, but only meditation, sacrificial offerings, repetition of the spells, abstention from sexual intercourse and the company of women, ascetic food, purity of mind and oneness of purpose After days of practice and concentration, the probationer, it is said, feels a sort of ecstacy and self-confidence, he is able to hear divine music, the sound of gongs, etc., and sometimes sees the figure of the deity. Such of the practitioners as have not

passed successfully through these ordeals and got mastery over the use of the spells are mere quacks. From the moment that such mastery has been obtained, the spirit-familiar does for the worshipper everything that he desires to be accomplished, it becoming both his master and servant at the same time.[1]

Ritualists of the common order receive no training other than what they acquire by observing their elders. Some of the shamans, we saw, were selected for the time being as occasion demanded. There are others who are more or less permanently attached to a temple as its *komaram*. The belief is that the deity selects its "tree", some are fit, others not. Several men are tried, but the spirit does not get on all of them. In a temple, when the old shaman dies, some one related to him, dresses himself as the shaman, carries the sword, sickle, or dagger in one hand, and in the other a small brass shield or a *chilambu* (a large anklet with pellets inside) and he walks with the procession during the festivals. He stands occasionally facing the image of the deity and meditates. If his limbs tremble, that shows that the spirit is descending on him, and then helped by the dinning sound of the drums and horns, he works himself up into a fit of trembling, and then he begins to jump up and down, rolling his eyes and staring wildly, and shouting. People are able to detect if the shamanistic trembling and jumping are genuine or pretended. For a genuine performance, the preliminary fit of trembling appears to be effortless, the whole appearance, voice and look change, and at the end of the dance which undoubtedly involves great physical and mental strain, the man collapses. The shaman has a traditional vocabulary full of archaic usages; *e.g.*, he addresses all the worshippers who crowd round to listen to him as "children", refers to God as "my good father", to smallpox as "seed", to the temple as "the house with ceiling" etc. During times of pestilence, the shaman distributes grains of rice which the worshippers keep in their houses to prevent disease-causing spirits from attacking them. When it is about time for the function to close, elderly men of the crowd would tell the shaman "The *komaram* is be feeling weak." "Then I shall retire." Saying this, the shaman bends, and leaning on the sword the tip of which is placed on the ground, gives a final, prolonged shout, and when he stands erect again, a couple of men support him from behind, while others remove his weapons. His limbs become flaccid and he sinks into the arms of those behind him; he is then placed on a mat and fanned to make him revive. Plate v, figs 1 and 2 show the stages of a shaman's performance on a day of offering toddy to the goddess Kali in Mananteri in North Malabar. The shaman is a Vannan. Over his usual white loin cloth he ties a red silk shawl and throws a smaller one on his shoulder. The offering of toddy is made to the goddess before her image, looking a bronze-glass inside the shrine by the Irava priest of the temple. The shaman is seen in plate standing in front

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[1] Ascetic practices in India, as Keith has pointed out, though they mean severer strain for the individual than the Christian ascetic ever thinks of, are not for the purpose of fleeing from the devil, but to gain more power over oneself and others. The close parallel that exists between the ascetic's penances and the magician's has led some to regard the one as derived from the other.

of the shrine on a platform and praying in the usual manner. Then he is given the arms by an assistant when he has begun to tremble. In figure 1 he is seen performing some step-dance in front of the altar where sacrificial offering are placed. In figures 2 can be seen the characteristic manner in which the shaman marches up and down shaking his weapons. In this figure the half-closed eyes and the seriousness of the face and the effect of the efforts at dissociation are well brought out.

Neurotic persons and hysterical women are believed to be under the influence of spirits, and hysterical manifestations are communally used. I interviewed a young Irava woman whose house had grown famous in recent years by numbers of men and women going there to get prognostications of events from her. As a girl she was subject to fits, was married thrice, but now has separated herself from the husband. According to her own statement given in answer to my queries when she was in her daily trance, a Brahman spirit had taken possession of her. She said, "I took pity on the *komaram.* I pitied her poverty. I came on her when she was bathing, she fainted and had to be carried away." During the trance she spoke as though she were the Brahman himself. The Brahman whose spirit is now dwelling in her was a " practitioner of spells " when alive, and his history is well-known in this particular locality. Nili was his spirit-familiar, and the " Irava prophetess " makes ritual offerings before an image of Nili kept in a shrine that was built recently. In a small room within her dwelling house there is a corner with a low stool or *pītham* placed for the spirit. After bathing in the morning, and performing the daily rituals in the Nili shrine, she retires into the small room, and works herself into the shamanistic fit. Her rapid breathing, groaning, and the guttural sound she produced made me feel as though she were weeping. Then she walked out covering herself with a silk shawl, her hands trembling all the while. Taking her seat on a bench in front of the shrine, she answers the queries of her clients about stolen property, causes of illness, chances of success, etc. She does this every day except when she is in her monthly period. She gets a decent income by way of presents given to her by the people who come to consult her. She requested me to send her a copy of the photograph that I tried to take of her, but though she prophesied that it would come out well, it did not. My impression is that her only capital for her business as " prophetess " is her fits, that her extra-sensory perception is confined to eliciting answers to their questions from the questioners themselves. The common belief about the women who get these mystic powers is that they cannot retain them long. One woman who was a prophetess for a year or two is now a nurse in one of the Government hospitals, and another is one of the bad characters of her village.

Spiritism is such a common phenomenon that children have what we might call trance games. Boys dance as shamans and enjoy imitating all the details of the spectacular shows that they witness at the temples. Girls have a game known as " making the dragonfly weep." One of a group of girls becomes the " dragonfly " and sits in the centre of a circle

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[1] Asiatic practices in India, as Keith has pointed out, rough they mean severe strain for the individual than the Christian aseatic ever thinks of, are not for the purpose of placing from the devil but to gain more power over ourself and others. The close parallel that exists between the aseatic's penances and the magicians had had some to regard the one as derived from the other.

formed by her friends who sing songs keeping time by rhythmic clapping of hands. They occasionally remove the cloth thrown over the girl's head to see if she is getting faint. After some time she begins to sway to and fro, when songs supposed to remove the faintness are sing. The little girls say that sometimes they pretend to be faint to deceive their friends, but at times, some of them feel a sort of giddiness.[1]

"Practitioners of spells" use the spiritual trance in the course of their rituals to hold conversation with the spirit that possesses a patient. They have special spells etc. (plate x, fig. 5) for inducing trance and use several physical and psychological devices for the purpose. One of these spells is freely translated thus :

> ***Om***. Let the ***kali*** (shivering) of Brahma climb (get on the person).
> Let the ***kali*** of Vishnu climb.
> Let the ***kali*** of Mahesvara climb.
> Let the ***kali*** of the horse climb.
> Let the ***kali*** of the dog climb.
> Let the ***kali*** of the elephant climb.
> Then fly from this world to the other world, twelve times two leagues. Let the great shivering come. *Svaha*.

To bring a person down to the normal state the following spell is used :

> ***Om***. Salutation to the Lord.
> ***Om***. I brought down the ***kali*** of the wild elephant, ... of the wild vat, ... of the fire.
> Let the ***kali*** go down, the ***kali*** that has been brought on by the trident and the diamond spell.

The "practitioner of spells" asks the patient during the trance, "Why have you come on this patient ? Who are you ? What do you want ? If you are given what you require, will you promise not to trouble the patient again ?" A typical answer which I heard is, "I have been wandering without a place for me to sit." Such a restless spirit that wanders about is "housed" in the manner we noted above. Other spirits, especially ancestral spirits, demand more attention and point out neglect on the part of the householders as the incitement for the possession. When a spirit is refractory, the "practitioner of spells" resorts to inflicting corporeal punishment on it by thrashing the patient with his cane.

Pūja is the most important ritual in all Hindu worship. The Vedic Aryan worship is different from this, in that it consists of offering sacrifices through the 'fire' (***homa***), which

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[1] The first part of the song to make the girl sway contains suggestions like this :—

Little bird, little bird of the lotus,
The leaf on which you sit sways.
Krishna goes to play dice with stones,
The stone goes up, there it goes up.

The second half contains lines asking the fly to get away :

Come, let us cross the little stream and bathe.

can be done only by the twice-born castes. Puja consists of establishing the deity on a seat or in an image, or even a mystical geometrical figure (*vantra* or *chakra*), and putting the offerings in front of such a representation. In the megalithic monuments of Southern India (*vide* my " Rock-cut cave tombs of Feroke." *Quart. Journ. Mythic Soc.* Bangalore, 1933) we find stone seats provided for the dead. Thus *puja* is an extension of the ancestor cult of great antiquity in non-Aryan India. The ritual of burnt offerings is new to the Iravas, only a few of the most skilled ***mantravadis*** knowing its technique. This is an instance of the borrowing of a Brahmanical cultural element by the Irava. Both the Namputiri and the Irava expert combine the two methods of offering, ***puja*** and ***homa***.

The articles that are offered in ***puja*** cover a wide range. All articles that the worshippers use as food, for personal enhancement, etc., are also offered to the deities. For the Muttappan at Parassinikkadavu (pl. v fig. 1, p.) toddy, salted fish, and the meat of the wild boar scorched over a fire are the favourite offerings. Offerings to the spirits of one's immediate ascendants consist usually of the articles of food for which they had a special partiality while they were alive. After placing the offerings in front of the low stools or images of the ancestral spirits, the son or the grandson making the offerings retires from the room, leaving the door slightly ajar. When the spirits come to enjoy the vapour of the offerings, it is said that the flames of the brass lamps flicker and crack. The new moon day in ***Tulam*** (October-November) is specially sacred, for it is on that day that the ancestral spirits expect to be given special offerings. People bathe in the sea on the morning of this day and give oblations of water to the manes, by pouring drops of it on representations crudely fashioned in boiled rice. The pose in offering these oblations is characteristic of all death-rituals—kneeling on one knee, and tucking the wet loin cloth between the thighs. The water thus offered slakes the thirst of the ancestral spirits and they become pleased with their descendants.

The rituals of the ***mantravadi*** begin with ***puja*** to the spirits. In the rituals photographed in plate ix, fig. 3, on the right of the ***mantravadi*** is seen the figure of ***Ghantakarna***, a spirit that usually causes small-pox, but in the present case is believed to be responsible for the patient's chronic headache. The figure is crudely made of rice, and then bordered with red, green, and white lines. Incense, food offerings, lights, ***bali***, and ***kaipandi*** (see p.) are arranged on the left of the figure. The wicks are lighted and waved over the ***bali***, then the incense is similarly waved, small quantities of the food are put in the ***bali***, all these acts being included in the preliminary ***puja***. Then the patient is seated in front of the ***mantravadi***, who waves the ***kaipandi*** in front of him while the patient is asked to have a handful of rice in his left hand from which to take small quantities, wave the closed fist with the grains over his trunk and face and throw into the ***kaipandi***. Then the ***mantravadi*** winds a hair from the crown of the patient's head on an iron nail. This nail with the hair will be driven into the trunk of a ***Strychnos nux-vomica*** tree. This tree is of great importance in all magic, since its strange qualities such as the extreme bitterness of the wood, leaves and

fruits endow it with spirit-arresting properties. The figure of the spirit drawn by the *mantravadi* together with the spells uttered by him causes the spirit to be present at the spot where the ritual is being conducted. The offerings please him and satisfy him and make easy the removal of his disease-causing presence from the patient. When everything is over the patient is asked to show his back to the *mantravadi* and give a slight kick to the *bali*, which with wicks burning in it is thrown away at a place where two footpaths cross.

Two ideas run through the whole of the above ritual procedure. One is the causation of diseases by spirit possession, and the other is the belief that by employing appropriate techniques, the spirits can be captured, imprisoned, or cajoled to leave the patient. Cholera, smallpox, leprosy, abortion, and all fevers are caused by angry spirits. Dysentery is one of the common diseases believed to be due to spirits taking vengence for unfulfilled promises of offerings. Sudden or accidental deaths again are regarded as being due to the malevolence of spirits. Mental derangement and hysteria are also caused by supernatural agencies. The cholera demon appears as a pig to people before being attacked. Menstrual troubles in young women are caused by demons like hairy animals having sexual intercourse with them. The hysteria demon is described as being rabbit-like[1] and is said to be the agent of Siva to punish those who defile Síva temples by having sexual intercourse in their vicinity. Spirits are threatened with punishment in some of the spells. We saw that they are driven away by inflicting bodily punishment intended for them on the medium who acts as their temporary residence. I have seen *mantravadis* staring wildly and fiercely at the patients possessed by the spirit and throwing grains of rice on them with great force shouting at the same time, "*Po!*" (get away). The following spell written on amulets to cure fever is of interest: "I will make you run. I will thrust (?) into your mouth and anus. If you will not go with that, I will then roast you in an iron cauldron. If you won't go with that, then I will roast you in a copper cauldron. If you won't go with that, then I will tie you to the (thorny) erythrina tree with creepers and beat you. By that go, by my teacher, by my lord, Svaha." Powerful magicians are able to make spirits immobile and tongue-tied. In a case that came to my notice, the shaman of the impish deity, Chattan (plate x, fig. 5), was reported to be unable to talk a word to his worshippers. This deity had been sent some weeks ago to harm a neighbour, but he had obtained the services of a powerful *mantravadi*, who, according to the story, had immobilised the powers of Chattan to communicate with his worshippers. While the spirits are thus made to look weaklings in the presence of the powerful *mantravadi* they have their own great strength for good or for evil on normal occasions.

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[1] Cf. the European incubus. See also my paper on "A psycho-analytical interpretation of Siva's Dance", *Indian Journ. of Psychology*, XV, 5, 1940.

It is of interest to note in passing that in some of their formulations, the people of Malabar take a Durkheimian attitude to their deities. The saying runs, "*ādikkoṇda daivam kūdikkollum.*" It means literally, "The god for whom there is much dancing will increase." In other words, the influence of a temple and its deity is proportional to the social energy spent on them. If the rituals are not properly performed, the temple is deserted by the indwelling god. There exists a balanced system of mutuality between the supernatural beings and their worshippers. The conferment of supernatural benefits is conditional to the performance of the correct and appropriate ritual acts. The Iravas explain the situation thus: "When you go to see a big man, say your landlord, you carry with you something as a gift for him. It is not proper for you to look at his face without placing something at his feet. So also in the case of the gods, to show that you are devoted you have to make some offering." The same idea has been carried further, and the gods of certain temples are supposed to be positively greedy. The god of the great temple at Guruvayur in South Malabar (Ponnani taluk) has several such instances of the exhibition of divine greed to his credit. If he saw a pair of beautiful ear ornaments in the lobes of a woman's ear, he would cause her pain in the ear to let her understand that he coveted the ornaments. The idea of the existence of a reciprocal relationship between gods and human beings is clearly expressed in the verse of Kalidasa which refers to the co-operation between the king of Ayodhya and the lord of the gods, Indra; the king by the performance of sacrifices fed the gods who, in their turn, pleased with the oblations, sent rain to make the earth productive.

One of the objects of the *mantravadi* drawing the figure of the spirit is to invoke his presence. In the practice of magic, several magical figures known as *yantras* or *chakras* are used. Each of them represents a deity (plate X). On the figures magical syllables and numbers are written. There are sixteen of these syllables, a combination of a few of which constitutes an acoustic symbol of the deity, just as a *yantra* is a linear representation and an image a solid representation. According to the *tantric* school all the various objects in the universe came into being when the Creator uttered the appropriate magical syllable for them. When he said "*bhu*:" there was the earth; "*ram*", there was fire, and so on. This is another way of putting that the language of magic is creative. It is this that gives the spells their power to produce the effects and accomplish the ends desired by the magician. The figure of the trident is found in most of the yantras (plate X). This is the weapon of Siva, the destroyer god of the Hindu trinity. The three points of the trident represent time, disease, and the god of Death, the three agents for death.

The verbal part of magical rites—the spells or *mantras*—contain a few magical syllables and then actual statements of what is desired in extremely emphatic and resonant prose. It is impossible in translation to bring out the effective manner in which words are used. According to Hindu logicians of some schools, the mere repetition of the spells with

appropriate rituals will produce the desired result. It is not necessary even to understand the meaning of the formulae used. In magical spells practical use is made of the incidents of myths. While in religion entire myths are dramatised and remembered, the spells select only certain contexts from them. Thus for love magic, a romantic incident from the story of a god is chosen and referred to, and a corresponding or parallel effect wished for. In the following simple spell used in curing swellings caused by thorns, a mythical incident is mentioned :

> " *Aum*. When Mahadeva (the great god) and his wife Parvati went out hunting, the goddess ran a thorn on her left foot, and wondering whether it was the thorn of a bamboo or of some shrubs, he took water in a silver *kindi* (a spouted vessel), muttered spells on the water, washed the feet, and extracted the thorn with a golden needle. In a similar manner, let the poison in this thorn go, oh, lord, by my teacher, *svaha*."
>
> (Free Translation)

The interesting point that should be noted here is that the magician has invented part of his myth, for according to the stories of the Hindus, Siva and his wife went out to hunt once, but there is no reference in them to the unfortunate incident of the thorn. In another spell in my collection, the god Vishnu is referred to as having caused all members of the Sun's household to sleep heavily, and then had illicit intercourse with the wife of the Sun ; the magician wants similar sleep to be induced in the relatives of the woman with whom he wants to sleep. In another spell for removing rat pest the rats are supposed to have gnawed at the god Siva's numerous tufts of matted hair and the god in anger is said to have thrown his trident at them and destroyed all the rats. In Vedic magic also there are instances of mythic parallels and precedents being invoked by the magicians to add to the effectiveness of his present actions.

The ***materia magica*** of Malabar will make a long list. While the sympathetic principle which is based on the mystic relationship of actions and objects is the chief idea in their use, these objects are not chosen in a haphazard manner. For example, in a simple magical rite to produce quarrels in the family of the enemy, mustard seeds are employed. These seeds always run away from one another. In another magical rite to cause suffering to an unresponsive and merciless woman, a live scorpion is tied to the spot where she has urinated. She would experience stinging pain as long as the spot remains wet ! To the performer of the rite, the mustard seed or the scorpion is his tool, but psychologically it is the materialized anticipation of his wish.

Surveying the situations in which magic is used I find from a rough statistical examination of the spells collected by me that the largest number of them are those that belong to the category of " magic of hate," performed for such purposes as separating husband and wife, or lovers, killing enemies, drying up the udder of milch cows belonging to a rival, etc. These form

about 25 per cent of the total. The next largest category is "medical magic," under which I include magical exorcism. About 20 per cent of the spells are for winning illicit love. The next 10 per cent are for gaining influence on other persons, almost a similar number for detecting theft or prevention of theft, and about 4 per cent for economic purposes such as stopping pests, increasing the yield of rice, milk, etc. Magic is well-known in Malabar as a hand-maid of medicine. In a well-known work on indigenous medicine, *Yogamṛtam*, for example, we find along with ordinary medical prescriptions magical formulae for the cure of such common complaints as headache. One of them concludes, "Let the pains and the evil spirits leave this head and go to another head."[1] (This narrow-mindedness is found in other magical formulae also, and reflects the low development of public spirit which vitiates all highly ritualistic faiths, which insist rarely on better personal ethics.) The psychotherapic value of magic has been specially recognized in the indigenous system of medicine, and its efficacy has been great, as long as belief in it was implicit. Interviewing an educated young woman, who had undergone magical treatment for anaemia on compulsion by her parents, I was told that the magician tried in vain his best to induce a trance in her, but she kept her mind wandering to overcome the effects of the loud noise produced by him.

In a case of hysteria where the symptoms are mild a conditional offering may be made to some temple, but if they are violent a *mantravadi's* services are sought. When a young woman is desirous of getting a good husband, but not any one in particular, she simply observes the fast known as the "Monday fast" and prays to the village or domestic gods, but if on the other hand she gets crazy about some particular individual, she may try to win his affections by administering him magical potions, generally through food or drinks. One young man known to me went mad and the talk in the village was that a cousin of his who wanted him to marry him had administered to him a love-pill through the small roll of betel leaves she gave him to chew. Young men are often warned against such risks by their elderly female relatives. For success in a law suit a man generally prays to his gods, but in specially difficult circumstances, he may have recourse to magical rites also. In tense emotional situations, when drastic and quick results are desired, when something normally impossible is to be achieved, magical means are requisitioned. Religion and magic overlap considerably in their technique, and in their rituals and beliefs there is much common ground, yet magic shows itself different from religion in being a concession to man's abnormal ambition, and exaggerated hope.

In the foregoing analysis we have tried to define what *mantravada* is by describing the rites so named. The "practitioner of spells" or *mantravadi* uses all the ritual techniques, all the theoretical knowledge possessed by his community for his profession. Practical ends are sought to be met by prayers and offerings to the temples, but for speedy and

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[1] **Yogamṛtam**, p. 248, Trivandrum Orient. Mss. Library Ed.

effective accomplishment of one's purpose, the ***mantravadi*** is employed, as he has mastered the technique of dealing with supernatural powers. If we equate magic with ***mantravada***, then magic is a way of effectively employing the supernatural. It is esoteric and individual in the sense that any specialism tends to be so. As all specialist knowledge tends to diffuse out and its elements become popular, magical rites of a simple kind are known to many. The spells are prayers reduced to formulae and mixed with suggestions and the anticipation of the results. In rituals of the magical variety, the principle of analogy is used as an aid to imagination as when causing an effigy of the enemy to be smoked, and the principle of sympathy in nature, as when seminal fluid is mixed in food used for love magic. These are an integral part of native knowledge and tradition. They argue in this manner :

> " If you eat the food of another man, you feel attached to him. It is bad for you to forget that. If your menstrual or seminal fluid is in another, even unconsciously, she or he must feel attached to you ."

There is thus no real antithesis between religion and magic, though the one differs from the other. In India religion and magic dovetail into each other.

Without risking the methodological error of going into stratification of culture which we have no means of checking by actual observation, it may be said that it is possible to detect the effects of Brahman contact on the magical rites on Malabar, because the features of vedic magico-religious system are clear-cut in some respects. We have already seen one important point of difference, *viz*., between the mode of offering through the fire and by *puja*. The sacred syllable *om* and many of the magical syllables are foreign to the native magical system. The magical rites of the Brahmans are believed by the people of Malabar to be more efficacious than those of others. The Irava magicians most probably learnt elements of Brahman magic second-hand from their Nayar teachers, who had better opportunities of studying it direct.

Since the coming of the English, no efforts have been made by the State to interfere in any way with the magical or religious beliefs of the people directly. Missionary propaganda against Hinduism, and English education have however been working indirectly to undermine belief in magic. Magic being seldom practised in public and on any elaborate scale has a more sheltered existence than religious rites and is less often subjected to criticism. English education however does not in all cases root out the belief in magic. Several educated men believe in the magical possibilities of yogic practices, that a yogi can conquer space and time, and be wherever he wants by mere willing for it.[1] There is however a steady decrease in the number of magical practitioners. Personal hatred and feelings that would formerly have led to magical rituals are now given vent to at the law courts, etc.

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[1] See Paul Brunton, *A search in secret India*.

The only instance of magical activities leading to a disturbance of public peace, which has come to my notice was at a village in Walluvanad taluk. A Mohammedan woman well-advanced in pregnancy was found murdered, her abdomen and womb torn open and the foetus removed. Paraya magicians of the locality were suspected, because there is a belief that they kill pregnant women in order to get the foetus out of which to make a magical oil known as ***pilla-tailam*** (foetus oil). This oil is supposed to make the Paraya magician invisible, and also capable of assuming any form that he wants. Paraya magicians employed for murderous purposes are known as *Oḍiyans*. The co-religionists of the murdered Moplah woman secretly murdered several Parayas of the locality on whom their suspicion fell.

The fear of Paraya magicians is very real. Young women avoid them, and, as a rule, no one displeases them. An Irava who believed in the skill of the *Odiyans* challenged me to put it to test. He said that the *Odiyan* if he wanted could remove me from within my room even if the doors were both bolted and locked and watched by several watchmen. The Parayan method of killing, it is said, is by placing a stout stick on the victim after felling him with a blow from behind, and then pressing it down till life is extinct. While the fear of his magic and death-dealing affords him some protection from the oppression tyranny of those above him, there is always the fear of unfounded suspicion falling on him for any major crime in his local area.

Quarrels due to suspected practice of sourcery used to be extremely common among villagers, but they are now rare. Medical magic, on the other hand, has declined very little probably because, European psychological medicine is much less known than that of the ***mantravadi*** of Malabar. British law in India ignored sorcery altogether and did not include it in the official list of crimes, while in some native states it found a place in the penal code.

THE GREAT TEACHER OF THE IRAVAS.

All the religious and ritual reforms of the Iravas that have been effected in recent years had their source in their great teacher, His Holiness Sri Narayana Guru. The history of this holy teacher is the history of the Iravas for the last fifty years. He embodied all their aspirations, gave direction to all their activities for self-improvement, and coordinated their efforts. He was not an iconoclast destroying old institutions and replacing them with strange new things, but he was a slow builder constructing a new superstructure on the existing foundations, and herein lay his success. Religion has been the greatest of all integrative forces in social life, and Sri Narayana's reforms which welded the Iravas into one powerful community were all through religion.

In the year 1854 in the village of Chempazhanti six miles from Trivandrum town in Travancore was born the wonderful infant who became later the regenerator of the whole Irava community. Little Nanoo (that was the shortened form of his name, Narayana) was

a younger son of his parents, who though belonging to the aristocratic section of the southern Iravas, were quite poor. His father was a village schoolmaster running a school of his own on the traditional old model. Nanoo studied in the village school for a time, and later went to study Sanskrit under a reputed teacher. He had in the meanwhile to look after the cattle and assist his father in his agricultural work. Every day he used to go up the hills that surrounded his village with the cattle and perching on the branches of the trees memorise literary masterpieces and devotional songs and meditate on their meaning. Even as a boy he showed his caste-breaking proclivities. He behaved familiarly with the children of the castes inferior to his, and used to worry his mother particularly by his polluting her by touching her before he had his purificatory bath. As a youth he had to assist his father in his school work also, but he was now given very much to meditation, fasts, and other traditional acts of self-disciplining. His ascetic tendencies alarmed his parents who wanted to put a stop to them by getting him married. According to the current stories, he left his home on the day that he should have got married. Very little is known about his life away from home for the next twelve years. He was rediscovered in the jungles of Aruvipuram some fifteen miles from Trivandrum where he is said to have lived in the caves eating wild fruits, roots and green leaves. As a mendicant he would occasionally go out into the villages with the beggar's bowl, sleep on the roadside, mingle with all kinds and castes of people. Wherever he went he used to attract great attention by his wonderful sparkling eyes and orange-gold complexion that is esteemed so high among South Indians. The fisherwomen of the coast found out that his presence among them was always an augury of a good catch. But his ways were mysterious, for he would disappear again in the woods for his penances and would not be seen for days. In the course of his wanderings he seems to have come in contact with one of the great yogis of South India and was initiated into the mysteries of the great system of Hindu monistic philosophy of which his later writings displayed such thorough grasp.

As his fame spread more people began to make pilgrimages to the *Swami* (Lord) in the Aruvipuram woods. Some went to him out of mere curiosity, but most others for getting diseases cured, for casting out evil spirits, or for getting their religious doubts and difficulties cleared. A letter from the mendicant was considered more effective than the most powerful ***mantravadi's*** work in curing people of mental diseases. One story tells how he brought rain when there was a terriffic drought in the country near Aruvipuram. He was very much moved by the suffering it brought to men and their cattle. He composed a prayer to God and asked the villagers to recite it. It is said that within a few hours there was rain.

Beginning thus as a wonder-worker, now known as the *Swami* to his people, he started his constructive work at Aruvipuram. The first temple of a Hindu god consecrated by a non-Brâhman was built at Aruvipuram on a hill. For their larger temples, the invariable Irava custom has been to get the consecration and establishment of the image in the temple done by a Brahman priest specially brought and paid for the purpose. Forthe annual purification

of the temples a Brahman priest is again invited to perform the "*śuddhi kalaśam*" or purificatory rite. So great was the prestige of the *Swami* that no one raised any protest. Perhaps one of the fortunate circumstances was that Aruvipuram was an out of the way place. Soon a school and a house for the disciples of the *Swami* appeared by the side of the temple. From the little committee that was organised to manage the temple arose the great political organisation of the Iravas now known as the *Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam* abbreviated as the S.N.D.P. Yogam, which became the model for all other communal associations even of the Brahmans and the Nayars who had in the first place no need for communal organisations to begin with, and when later on the need arose, there was not the leadership which the Iravas fortunately found in their teacher. When his work at Aruvipuram was completed the *Swami* settled at a new place known now as Sivagiri (the Hill of Siva) in Central Travancore. This place became the Mecca of the Iravas. Beautifully situated on a hillock on the sea-shore, with perennial springs of water oozing from the sides of the hill, and crowned by the beautiful neat looking buildings that have come up since the *Swami* made it his headquarters, Sivagiri is rightly worthy of its founder. It will be impossible to find a cleaner place than this in any part of Malabar. His Holiness was a great lover of cleanliness and that love is seen everywhere. Higher up on the hill at a spot that he had marked out while alive can be seen the temporary tomb in which his mortal remains have been interred. The body is placed in a grave filled with common salt, camphor, sandal paste and spices. Over the grave are the stone *linga* and *yoni*, the phallic symbol of generation. A brass lamp is kept burning by the side of the *linga* day and night. The small room ten feet square in which the *Swami* used to live—now a place of pilgrimage like his tomb—stands near the latter. The larger buildings are offices, kitchens and the residences of the sanyasin disciples and visitors. Perched on a neighbouring hill is the English school founded by the *Swami*. At Alwaye further north in Travancore, there are the new temples and a Sanskrit college that owes their origin to him. Every large village or town of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, where there are a fairly large number of Iravas, had a new style temple built, and consecrated by him. The new Irava temple at Tellicherry in North Malabar, known as the Jagannatha temple, is not only one of the best temples in that town, but also one that is made the best use of. There is a fine statue of the *Swami* near the temple. Every year at the time of the annual festival in the temple, agricultural and other exhibitions are held and prizes given to the exhibitors. The temple founded by His Holiness at Calicut is the centre of the socio-religious activities of the Iravas of that town. The *Swami* travelled throughout the length and breadth not only of the countries where there were Iravas, but also into the neighbouring Canarese and Tamil districts where he had many followers. The Billavas of South Canara who are the analogues of the Iravas in that district had a temple for themselves consecrated by the *Swami* whom they also considered as their *guru* (teacher). He visited Colombo where there is a large colony of Irava emigrants, and the number of institutions there for the welfare of these people that originated as a result of his influence is

large. Wherever he went, he went not as a preacher of religion with messianic fervour, but as a practical man of business. His humour was incisive and directed towards practical ends. Forty years of useful work which brought untold benefit to his people and also other communities similarly placed, earned Sri Narayana an all-India fame and tributes were paid him by Tagore, Gandhi and C. F. Andrews. Few men of his generation and times had done such wonderful work as this Irava of a backward Travancore village.

To-day, twenty-two years after his death, he is almost a god to the thousands of his people. In almost every home they keep a picture of his and offer flowers in front of it. Others remember gratefully the valuable services that he rendered to Malabar and salute his memory with love and veneration.

His lessons to his people took the form of special messages. The first referred to the growing need for temples. The Iravas had few temples which could be regarded as public temples and of these, most of the deities worshipped were evil spirits or some hero-spirits for whom bloody sacrifices of hundreds of goats and hens used to be performed annually. The Iravas were generally ignorant of the higher aspects of Hinduism. Better temples and purer forms of worship would go a long way in improving the religious standard of the people. The temples consecrated by the *Swami* were better built, and were dedicated to the better gods of the Hindu pantheon. The *Swami* seems to have had a partiality for Saivite gods. In none of the new temples animal sacrifices were allowed, and puja rites were performed by trained ritualists from Sivagiri. They were no doubt modelled on Hindu temples, but the latter did not allow the Iravas to worship from close quarters. The new temples not only provided better places of worship for the Iravas, but satisfied their craving to possess houses of worship that could compare with those of the higher castes. The building of the temples in costly style was made possible by the better economic position of the Iravas and also by the enthusiasm and co-operative spirit generated by the *Swami*. It was no small satisfaction to the average Irava to have temples that were communally owned. More temples meant more intense Hinduisation of the Iravas. The *Swami* was a poet in addition to his being a good physician and Sanskrit scholar. He composed several beautiful devotional verses which were far in advance of the crude verses that children studied in schools of which I have given a few samples in the chapter on Education.

After the reforms in the temple, the *Swami* turned his attention to the reform of domestic rituals. The abolition of ***talikettu*** has already been referred to (p.). He thought it was irrational and unnecessary. The method adopted by him in stopping it is interesting and was parallel to the one suggested by me for agricultural propaganda. He stopped a few aristocratic families performing the rite for their daughters, and the rest of the people followed the example of the local leaders.

Attention was next paid to the reformation of the marriage rite. We saw in an earlier chapter that Irava marriage had as its most important item the giving of the cloth by the

man's group to the girl, and that sometimes the bridegroom did not go to fetch his bride, but had her brought to his home by his sister and a party of his relatives and villagers. About three decades ago, the *Swami* suggested modifying the rituals of marriage in the following manner. It was to be like the *prajāpatya* form of marriage of the Hindus, wherein the father or guardian of the bride joins the hands of the bride and bridegroom by putting the right hand of the former on the right hand of the latter and pouring water from his hand to the groom's. Then the bride garlands the bridegroom and the latter ties a *tali*—the little ornament that fulfils the function of the European wedding ring—round the neck of the bride. This new form of marriage has been recognized by law in Travancore and is being rapidly copied in all Iravan areas. Some of the more well-to-do people have introduced the Brahmanical rite of *homa*, the underlying idea of which is to have the fire-god as the witness of the marriage, thus making a fully religious rite of marriage.

In the legal sphere His Holiness pleaded for the necessity of men making provision for their children in matrilineal families. The Irava Regulation and the Madras Marumakkattayam Act have done what he wanted by legislation.

The creation of an order of monks now known as the *Dharma Sangha* was the next great task accomplished by the *Swami*. Men dedicating themselves to service of humanity remaining celibate throughout life had its beginning in India probably during the Buddhist times, but the present-day survivals of monasticism are only its externals, *viz.*, the saffron robes and the beggar's bowl. A permanent body of selfless workers who have voluntarily accepted poverty, celibacy, and service was considered desirable for carrying on his work. The new priests of the community were to be the members of this order.

The best known of all the messages of the *Swami* was the one asking his people not to observe caste. "All men belong to one race and one caste. There is only one religion and one God." He commanded men not to ask one another what his or her caste is, not even to think of caste. He wanted that belief in caste differences should be eradicated. He wanted that the state should legislate to enable people not to be put to the necessity of giving their caste in documents, which practice continues in most places even now. He believed that caste degenerated arts and crafts by all and sundry taking them up without the necessary aptitude for them but only on the strength of their being born to a man doing the particular kind of work. Progress becomes impossible under such circumstances. Caste made people narrow-minded, know of only one little thing in the world. Caste benefited only the persons at the top. His own men were not all of them either able to understand the significance of the new message or to act up to it fully. A small number of the more advanced among the Iravas used the authotity and prestige of the *Swami* to carry on propaganda for the abolition of the caste system and the caste idea from the midst of the Iravas themselves in the first place. Rightly they argued: "We are asking the castes above us to recognise our equality with them. It is only proper at the same time that we should remember that there are castes below ours to whom we should

concede the same rights that we claim for ourselves." From this standpoint was started the campaign for the abolition of the tabus against commensalism with members of the lower castes, the repercussions of which we had occasion to notice in an earlier chapter. In his own headquarters the *Swami* abolished caste by employing cooks of the lowest castes. Men of all castes were admitted to the temples at Sivagiri, Alwaye and Aruvipuram. It took some time for members of the serf castes to be admitted to the Irava temples in North Malabar. People were naturally inclined to claim rights for themselves but reluctant to yield their claims to others. To the credit of the Iravas it must be said that they were the first people in Malabar to recognise unasked the claims of serf castes to worship along with others in Hindu temples, and they were first also in admitting them to their shrines to worship.

Further, the *Swami* advocated inter-caste marriages with a view to root out caste, but he could not do much in this respect. Except presiding at an inter-racial marriage of an Irava youth with a German woman (she became a Hindu renouncing Christianity), he does not seem to have actively participated in any social reform marriages. But to-day his teachings are actively being put into practice.

In the realm of economics, he advocated the abolition of the traffic in liquor. His Holiness expressed himself emphatically on this matter : " Liquor is poison. To drink it is sin. To produce it and sell it are also sin." We have already discussed the social and economic aspects of the prohibitionist movement among the Iravas (pp. .).

His Holiness Sri Narayana was a good type of the Hindu *yogi* above caste and creed like the great Buddha. He went against the traditions of the Hindus in proclaiming the essential oneness of mankind. But here he did not break new ground. Buddha had done it centuries ago and many other religious reformers had done so, but in vain. Sri Narayana's efforts in a caste-ridden country like Malabar bore some fruit as caste was breaking down due to great political and economic changes. By giving religious sanction to the new trends, he quickened the pace of change. His people were craving to raise themselves up socially ; for them he showed the religious and ritual channels in the first place and the social means in the second instance for such upliftment.

From the point of view of our present study each of the messages of the great Irava teacher was the provision of new norms of conduct for his people. New norms are not accepted and incorporated all of a sudden, but take time to propagate themselves even if there is no resistance offered to them. We saw there was mild resistance to some of the new suggestions, more violent opposition to others, but most of them found acceptance with an advanced minority who were the torch-bearers of culture change. This class was constituted mainly by those who had received some education and had opportunities to come into direct contact with the associates and the disciples of the *Swami*. The rural population were the least affected and the slowest to change, but among them it became a kind of clash between the younger and the older generation. The older generation tried to carry on the crude rituals with

bloody sacrifices, and continue to pay adoration and propitiate the spirits and ghosts as of old. But they were not quite uninfluenced by the new temples, where they could worship near as the Nayars and others did in their temples. But adherence to tradition and the fear of the evil consequences that might result from the discontinuance of the old customary practices helped to some degree the persistence of the old practices. Just as the new and old norms run their parallel course in the family and caste groups, so also the new temples and the old temples continue side by side. The propaganda against animals sacrifices has been recently supported by the Government of Travancore who have stopped it in all temples under their control. But the inertia of custom here also makes the old practice continue. In all these there is no real clash of norms, because the acceptance of the new norm is a certainty in course of time.

As I see them, the Iravas can be classified now into three groups according to their general outlook on life. First comes a small group of educated people who believe in a universal standard of conduct which is nearer the Western European than the Indian standard ; second, a larger group that want to be good Hindus enjoying equality and freedom within the Hindu fold ; and third, numerically the largest who do not give serious thought to these problems, but are satisfied to continue as their parents were with such slight changes as do not give rise to comments. We may term the last group as the conservatives among the Iravas, calling the other two as moderates and radicals. The moderates are the people who aspire to adopt the upper caste norms in all matters. The earlier efforts of the reformers were aimed at effecting this approximation. In claiming equality of caste status, the demonstration of that fact was first to be made in the matter of cleanliness, in rituals, in the way of getting married and even in the high gods that were being worshipped. By copying Brahman rituals, the Irava could not become a Brahman, but he showed that the difference between them and their so-called superiors was only nominal, not factual. The radicals on the other hand had no use for anything that was peculiarly Hindu, as according to them the Hindu-Brahman norms left much to be desired and required to be reformed on Western European lines. Many of these people naturally think that the temples and the new order of monks are futile and useless.

RELATION BETWEEN CHANGE IN BELIEF AND CHANGE IN RITUAL.

Theoretically we expect to find some sort of rough correlation between changes in rituals and in the beliefs concerning them. An analysis of some of the changes that have taken place shows that while this correlation exists in some cases, it does not exist in others. We shall begin with an analysis of the changes in marriage rites. The reader is referred to the chapter on kinship (pp.) for the details of the marriage ceremonies. There we saw that a series of ties were created by economic and ceremonial exchanges. The clothes created what is called the " thread relationship," and the giving of ritual food by the relatives and the

iṇangan in the presence of all the guests created the " sweet tie." We also saw that in the peculiar Iravan terminology, the bride was " mortgaged." The rites, the belief and the sociological practices all agreed, but later, these factors underwent considerable changes. Earlier in this chapter, I indicated that the new marriage rite suggested to his people by the great teacher consisted in the father making a gift of his daughter to the groom, in her accepting him by garlanding him, and in his tying the symbol of marriage round her neck. This type of marriage ritual has spread almost everywhere, including most of the villages, except in the most backward areas. The first reason for its popularity is its aesthetic appeal, especially in the garlanding. In the Hindu epics with which the Iravas are becoming increasingly acquainted, the heroines like Sita and Damayanti are described as garlanding their husbands by way of accepting them. The appeal of this ceremony to the Irava men and women is certainly great. It is not part of the orthodox Brahmanical ritual of marriage, but just an ancient custom recorded in myths. The old rites, especially the giving of food in public, was quite unaesthetic in the eyes of the young people, just as the old dress of the bridgegroom was regarded crude. Another factor that was missing in the old marriage rite was any direct ritual dealings between the bride and the bridegroom. The bridegroom did not give even the clothes, which is supposed to be an important rite. In the new rituals, both the bride and the bridegroom had their parts to play. Here we see the greater personal emphasis in the ritual of marriage, which is in accord with the sociological changes which made the duties of the husband to his wife and children more pronounced. The changing culture of the Iravas made the tie between the man and his wife more lasting, less subject to disruption due to the interference by relatives. The ***iṇangan*** is no longer useful in the modern type of marriages. One of the monks trained in modern rituals officiates as the priest, and he repeats the Sanskrit verses appropriate for each item in the rituals. The formula recited when the hands are joined is freely translated thus : " For beauty I grasp thy hand. With me as thy husband mayst thou grow old. The gods have given thee to me to be the mistress of my household." There is no public giving of the earnest money or bride wealth, which economic transaction is against the spirit of the ritual and the new status of the Irava wife ; and the dowry and other articles given to the bride by her people are not similarly done in public as a part of the ceremonies. The strength of the new marriage tie is reflected in the growing unpopularity of divorces among the Iravas. They, however, have not established any convention as the Brahmans have of the indissolubility of marriage. It is interesting to note that while under the old system the Iravas had definite rituals for divorce, now they have none, and it remains to be seen how future events will shape themselves in this respect. For the matrilineal people, the law courts provide a legal procedure for divorce. No recent case of divorce of people in the patrilineal area who were married according to the new rites has come to my notice, but I think, in such cases it must be merely a matter of the parties agreeing to separate after settling their accounts. So, after a brief survey of the factors involved in the change in marriage rituals

and in the beliefs behind the rituals we see some correspondence between the changes under the two heads. The Iravas have adapted existing rituals to suit their conditions. It cannot be said of them that they have merely copied the Brahman rituals. They have avoided making the mistakes of the Brahman who enforce the continuance of the married state even when the parties do not want it.

An ancient initiatory rite, confused by some for an ancient form of marriage, and now given up by most Iravas is well known as *tāli-kettu kalyāṇam*. This was the first of the traditional ceremonies that the great teacher asked his men not to waste their money upon. I need not describe it in detail, because it is well described by Iyer and Thurston.[1] I shall only add here a few points which they have not been able to record, but which are very important in understanding the nature of the ritual. *Tāli-kettu* in North Malabar is called ***pandal** kalyanam*. The details of the rite vary very considerably in different parts of Malabar. In the extreme north, the young girl who has not attained puberty is secluded for three days as though she has menstruated. On the fourth day she is taken to a pond for bathing. On the edge of the pond her brother plants an arrow with its point up. The object of this is said to be to drive away evil spirits. Returning home after the bath, the barber decorates the girl. Then she enteres the pandal (shed on the yard in front of the house) with her face covered and led by girls having *tālams* in their hands. The barber pours drops of coconut milk on her head and then uncovers her face. The barber's wife goes through the acts of making her grind condiments and cooking sweet porridge telling her at the conclusion of the rite, "Prepare sweet porridge, give it to father and mother, and to me, and keep what remains in the *uri*" (*uri* is a rope support for keeping vessels suspended). After this the girl's mother's brother's wife ties the *tali* round her neck. The *tali* here is a flimsy piece of gold leaf tied to a string which cannot and does not remain long on the girl's person. If the girl is already betrothed, then instead of her mother's brother's wife, the young man's mother's brother's wife ties the *tali*. Here there is no further ceremony of divorce as is done in the south. There is no suggestion here that this rite of *tali*-tying has anything to do with marriage.

In central Malabar the ceremony is more elaborate. There is here a special person chosen to act the part of the *tali*-tier. He should be of some affinal clan, and his horoscope should be auspicious and should match with the girl's, as in a real marriage. The village artisans bring an arrow which the girl has to carry in her hand, a short staff (*ponti*) for the *tali*-tier, a low stool, a wooden bottle (*cheppu*, an auspicious object), and a brass mirror which the girl has to hold in her hand during the ceremony. The Paṇa brings an umbrella (*pīlikkoḍa* or peacock-feather umbrella) for the girl and another for the man (the ***anka-kuḍa*** or war umbrella). The *tali*-tier puts on the dress of the bride groom only after reaching the girl's house, whereas the real bridegroom puts it on throughout his journey. The girl

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[1] *Tribes and Castes of Cochin* by Iyer, and *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* by Thurston. *See* also my paper "Meaning of the *Tali* Rite" in *Bull. Rama Varma Res. Institute* (*Trichur*) 1942.

puts on a special turmeric paste mark on her forehead. The clothes for the occasion both for the *tali*-tier and the girl are purchased by the father of the latter. The uncle of the girl takes her to the *pandal* and she is seated by the side of the *tali*-tier. At the auspicious moment announced by the village astrologer, the *tali*-tier places the ornament on the girl's neck, and her mother or father's sister waiting behind her fastens it round her neck, by tying the knot behind. This is followed by the ceremony of giving sweet drink as in a regular marriage. The girl is taken in and secluded in a room for four days. The new loin-cloth which the *tāli*-tier wore at the time of the rite is to be kept by her side. On the morning of the fourth day the loin-cloth is got from the girl's room, and is cut into two. The *tāli*-tier takes a thread and saying to the brother of the girl, " Here is your sister's *achāram* " (see p.) he snaps it. He takes the two pieces of cloth with him when he goes away. It is not customary for the girl to observe the death pollution of her *tāli*-tier, though it is the custom among some Nayars.

In the southern Irava areas the *tāli*-tying rite is still more elaborate. A decorated pillar of the jack-fruit tree is planted in the pandal thirty days in advance of the ceremony. The *tāli*-tier may sometimes be younger than the girl for whom he ties the *tāli*. He dresses himself elaborately, the special part of the dress being a conical cap, and goes to the girl's house on an elephant or horse. The ceremony is conducted for a group of girls of a ramage to save the expense. Each of the girls has her special *tāli*-tier. The girls have their heads covered and have turmeric-paste marks on their forehead. The *tāli*-tier places the ornament on the girl's neck, the girl covering her eyes with a betel leaf as he does so. The girl remains secluded for four days, when the *tāli*-tier also remains with her. (This is the usual practice among the Nayars). On the fourth night the girl is taken to be bathed in a pond. Here the agnatic and affinal relatives of the girl indulge in throwing balls of turmeric paste on each other. In the Travancore area there is no formal divorce of the *tāli*-tier.

It is impossible to reconstruct completely the history of this rite, as many people have fruitlessly tried to do. The most popular and widely held theory about *tāli-keṭṭu* is that the Namputiris of Malabar were responsible for its present form. For the purpose of getting Nayar concubines easily, it is said that they made the man vicariously marry a young girl and then divorce her at once. Such a divorced woman, according to this theory, could be married by the Namputiris by the simpler rite of cloth-giving which is less binding than the *tāli*-tying rite. The Iravas who have nothing to do with the Namputiris sexually, says the theorist of this school, simply imitated the Nayars. In the Travancore Census Report (1931), a new theory is put forward, that the *tāli-keṭṭu* rite was a real marriage, but when another form of marriage which came in to widen the field of choice, *tāli-keṭṭu* degenerated into a meaningless rite (p. 162). According to Anantakrishna Iyer, " the *tāli* is a symbol which signifies that the girl is fit to become a wife. It is only a kind of betrothal ceremony as among the Brahmans." (*Man*, 320, 1932). Years ago, when I was interested in going into the history

of the rite I thought it was wrong to blame the Namputiri for the degeneration of the *tāli-keṭṭu* into a mock-marriage. I also thought that marriage by cloth-giving was the most ancient form of marriage and marriage by *tāli*-tying should have been introduced by the Namputiris, just as they brought advanced rituals for other purposes also. So many historical factors have to be considered in coming to any definite conclusions on this subject that I think that it is waste of time to build theories on its origin. Any one who wants to do so will have to go into the history of the Nayars and Namputiris for at least 2,000 years for which there is no written records, and the oral and other traditions give little help. I have collected considerable references to *tāli*-tying, and yet after everything is done, I am only convinced of the truth of what has been impressed on us by Prof. Malinowski, namely, for anthropology to be more scientific, historical speculations had better be taken up last, after careful survey has been made of the present day realities of culture. So leaving aside the theories of others as well as mine, and going into the real data that we have on this moot subject, we see that there is a definite belief recorded in folk songs that *tāli*-tying is to give the girl the status of a woman. " Wearing the *tāli*, makes a woman ; wearing the warriors waist band makes a Nayar." The *tāli* is a simple ornament. The Kaniyans of North Malabar used to have the *tāli* made of the tender leaf of the coconut tree. In North Malabar, the *tāli*-tying has little of the elements of marriage, but has more of the character of an initiation ceremony. The girl has to pass through a period of seclusion as though she had menstruated. In the South where the ceremony is much more elaborated, the seclusion follows the *tāli*-tying and the girl and the person tying the *tāli* undergo rites that have a semblance to cohabitation. There is nothing done in the South corresponding to what the barber woman does in the North by way of teaching her adult duties to the girl. The rule that a girl should undergo the *tāli*-tying ceremony before she attained puberty was obeyed everywhere until the recent reform movements arose. Parents who were not in a position to conduct an elaborate ceremony, tied the *tāli* themselves on the Onam day in front of the clay representation of Siva placed at their doors. Nowadays many people go to a temple and have the *tāli* tied in front of the temple. Whatever be its history, to the people of Malabar as a whole *tāli*-tying in recent years meant nothing more than an initiatory rite, preliminary to attaining marriageable status. To me it seems that the regular marriage by *tāli*-tying which is the practice among the Tamils and which has been recently adopted by the Iravas is a combination of the initiation and the marriage rites which were separated in Malabar. Otherwise it is impossible to explain why a Namputiri Brahmin father should in Malabar tie the *tāli* for his daughter at the time of her marriage when the bridegroom is present on the spot. To the Tamil not accustomed to the peculiarities of Malabar, the father's act of tying the *tāli* for his own daughter, which according to his native custom is tantamount to his marrying her, would come as a shock. The ritual elaboration of *tāli*-tying among the Nayars and the richer Iravas must have been to satisfy the craving to imitate the Namputiri rites in their externals. Witness for example the Malayalam songs

sung by the officiating woman at Nayar *tāli-keṭṭu* ceremonies. She is said to sing these benedictory verses in the same tune in which the Namputiris chant their Sanskrit formulae!

Why was the *tāli-keṭṭu* ceremony the first of the rituals to be attacked by the Irava reformers? To them the meaning of the rite as it was conducted seemed to be an absurdity. For all appearances the little girls underwent the ceremonies of marriage and divorce in an unreal dramatized manner, and their real marriage had to come later on. It satisfied no cultural need. The function of the rite as an initiation had been completely overgrown by its other accessories. When people live in societies with several norms this kind of confusion seems to be inevitable. There is here less of standardisation than in simpler societies with uniform norms of conduct for all their members. When the abolition of *tāli-keṭṭu* was proposed by the reformers, the old-fashioned men had no arguments to advance in support of its continuance. Because it was not an essential rite, no attempt was made to reform it, as was done in the case of the marriage rite. *Tāli-keṭṭu* as it is now observed in some of the most backward rural areas of Malabar, may be regarded as an atrophied item of culture, giving no indication of the original beliefs behind it.

MORTUARY RITES.

An analysis of the mortuary rituals of the Iravas under the old stable conditions and the unstable changing conditions of the recent past brings to light several important theoretical factors, for which reason I propose to go into greater details on the subject than I have done in the case of other rites. We saw that the correlation between ritual and belief was very close in the case of marriage ceremonies of the Iravas. Marriage as an important social institution, the functions and interrelations of which are clearly and intelligently understood by the members of the community, has to rest upon solid and real foundations. If the latter fall short of the expectations of the people, it brings about an unstable equilibrium. In other words, institutional norms and the needs felt by the people must be closely correlated. The ideology behind death rites is more complex; the relation between the needs and the norms are necessarily vague. If the elaboration of a ritual is a measure of the importance of the situation on which it is based, then from this point of view, death is undoubtedly, the most important of social situations, for among the Iravas no ceremony is as elaborate as those connected with death. The wound created by the loss of a member of the community has to be healed, and those that are left behind have to carry on their normal functions undeterred by the shock given by death. The creation of a world of spirits and propitiating and ministering to the needs of the dwellers therein, however valuable it may be for the prevention of the disintegration of society, is less rooted in actuality than marriage. Very little intelligence is exercised on the rituals in connexion with death compared to the pains taken over those in connexion with marriage. We saw that the spiritual leader of the Iravas prescribed

new rituals for marriage, but made few suggestions regarding death ceremonies. Would-be innovators of death-rites are themselves unnerved by the emotional stress when they are faced with the loss of a near and dear relative. In such situations man craves for the traditional means of consolation. Thus, while philosophical speculations about death and other problems advance, mortuary rituals remain unaltered. The *karma* and the transmigration theories of the Hindus are so deeply ingrained in the popular belief of the Hindus that at every turn one hears discussions and references to them, and would naturally expect to see them expressed through their rituals. But the rituals of the Hindus whether high or low remain divorced from their higher philosophical beliefs. If every soul, as soon as it leaves one body enters a fresh one, as the *karma* theory explains, there is little use in offering boluses of souls rice to departed! Death rituals and beliefs about death are not thus correlated but show a great divergence.

death

Another point brought out by the study of Irava mortuary rites is that they always tend to hypertrophy. I quoted above the example of a man who ruined himself financially by borrowing a big sum to celebrate the death feast of his mother. Not only in the matter of the feasts but also in the matter of rituals this anxiety and eagerness to do the utmost in one's power for one's dead realtive is a ruling passion in the mind of most persons. The death rituals of the Iravas were the only class of their rituals that approximated to the Brahman model long before they had the easy facilities they now have for ritual adaptations. The Brahmans of Malabar have in their mortuary rituals many items that are non-Vedic and in all probability non-Aryan.

The beliefs about death among a literate people like the Iravas are not uniform. Among the English educated, as among the old fashioned people there are diverse philosophical schools. The few rationalists among them want to stop all rituals connected with death. On the other hand, there are the most backward folk who can only roughly formulate their beliefs regarding a postmortem existence. They only know that the soul (*jīvan* or life) leaves the body, when " God calls it " and that it continues as an etherial something in the atmosphere, retaining all the while its human emotions and attachments. The spirit of a powerful and influential man continues to be so even after death. The spirits of persons who meet with accidental death hover about the spot of death. According to the more (traditionally) informed among the Iravas, the soul is wrested from the body by the messengers of the god of Death (*Kāla*) and has to go a long and perilous distance to the kingdom of the terrible god, where the spirit is punished for its sins.[1] The souls of specially good men, devotees of Siva or Vishnu, are believed to be taken directly to the world of these great gods instead of being carried to the world of Kala. A blind old Irava woman expecting death was heard by me chanting verses which were prayers addressed to Siva requesting the God to send his men

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[1] Ritual methods of deceiving the god of death are discussed in my paper on the Nayadis of Malabar, Madras Government Museum Bulletins (General Series), Vol. II, No. 4.

to fetch her soul and thus save her from the terrors of the messengers of the god of Death. She told me that she could occasionally see the golden figures of the gods coming to her! Gold coins, leaves of the holy basil sacred to Siva, grains of rice, etc., are put into the mouth of the dying person. The coin is supposed to be for meeting the expenses on the journey. The corpse is compared to a cage from which the bird imprisoned has escaped, or to the juiceless matter left behind after the milk has been expressed from scraped coconut kernel; it is an impure and polluting thing, and it fills the atmosphere with fear.

The following conversation between a fatherless child and the widowed mother reveals how belief in post-mortem life is conveyed from the older to the younger generation. "Can father see us from where he is?" asks the little boy. "Yes," says the mother, "the dead have the senses just as we have, the only difference is they cannot express their feelings as we do. So theirs is a greater suffering than ours." Another mother tells her children that she heard the tapping sound of the dead father's sandals on the outer veranda at night. Young children look at the red glow that spreads on the western horizon at sun-set and say, "Look, there is the redness caused by the accumulation of the blood of the dead." Death is popularly spoken of as the "journey to the south from which no one returns", for, the south is the region where the god of death dwells, and the burials take place in the southern quarter of the compound. The general fear of death lies more in the manner of the death than in the death itself. So in quarrels people are cursed to have painful death. "May you die with worms/all over your body" or "May you die without being able to drink a drop of water" are the usual curses.

in ulcers/

As soon as life is extinct, the body is removed from its cot and laid on a grass mat and covered with a sheet of cloth, and a lighted brass lamp, known hence forward as the "shadow lamp" is kept at its head. The *Inangan* is the first person to get ceremonially busy. After lighting the lamp he breaks a coconut and keeps one half at the head and the other at the feet of the corpse. He then bathes and brings a pot of water, moistened clothes, turmeric roots, the bark of the mango tree and a big banana leaf for placing the dead body on. The dead body is then brought to the yard with the eldest son holding the head and the other relatives holding other parts of the body, and it is placed on the banana leaf. While doing this all of them tuck their lion-cloth between their thighs. Then the body is swathed in the shrouds[2] provided by the various relatives. The extra number of shrouds, if a man has a large number of affinal relatives to bring them, are the perquisites of the Vatti and the Vannan. The shroud is fastened in the region of the head, abdomen and feet, and small holes are made in it at the mouth, navel and the sexual organs. One of the two halves of the coconut is kept on the chest of the corpse underneath the shroud. At the leg end, a piece of the shroud is left loose, which has to be cut later on.

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[2] In some places the body is bathed, and decorated with sandal paste marks. Betel leaves are put into the mouth.

A small wooden mortar is placed at the feet of the corpse. The *Inangan* places the bark and turmeric roots in it, and the chief mourner, standing with his back to the mortar and facing the dead body, touches the mortar with his feet and grasps a pestle at his back in his hands, asking as he does so, " May I pound the mango bark and turmeric for my father ? " The actual pounding of the stuff is done by the *Inangan*, who makes a mixture of it in water. He also husks some paddy which is to be used for the rituals that follow. The reddish fluid obtained from the mortar is sprinkled on the corpse by all the mourners. Both turmeric and the mango bark are purificatory articles, and their ritual use is obviously for purification which is done in some places by the actual bathing of the dead body. Ritual abbreviation of many normal acts is quite a common phenomenon.

The rule among the Iravas is for the corpse to be cremated or buried in the southern part of the garden or compound of the family residence, but, a typically, some people inter or cremate dead bodies on the banks of rivers or water courses under the belief that it is better that the bones are washed away by the water, as it liberates the spirit completely, there being none of its material relics to which it can cling to.

Cremation is comparatively later than burial as a method of disposal of the dead among the Iravas. The majority still follow the older custom, because it is also less costly especially in the areas where firewood is dear. Cremation, as a rule, is reserved for elderly men and women even in the interior villages where mango wood, which is the common material for making the pyre with, is found in plenty. Cremation is the usual method prevalent among the Brahmans among whom infants and criminals only are interred. There is little doubt that the non-Brahmans of Malabar borrowed the cremation method from the Namputiris, but the interesting point here is that though the process of borrowing must have begun centuries ago, it has very little affected the other items of the Irava mortuary rites.

The sons go round the pyre thrice, carrying the corpse, taking care to keep its head to the south during the circumambulation. Before setting fire to the pyre, the *Inangan* cuts off the loose piece of the shroud (known hence forward as the *sesham*) and hands it to the chief mourner, who has to cover his head with it during the following ceremonies. The chief mourner sets fire to the pyre at the head end with a firebrand lighted from the " shadow lamp " kept burning inside the house.

Now all the relatives standing round throw on the pyre handfuls of water from the pot brought by the *Inangan*. This is said to cool the pyre. This act is interesting, becuase it shows a peculiar attitude of mind. They are now burning the remains of one dear to them, which is a painful fact, but while they bow to the inevitable, they still offer it a weak ritual resistance. Sympathy and feeling for the dead evidently extends also to his lifeless remains.

Water is again sprinkled on the pyre by the mourners beginning from the leg side. The next rite is the breaking of the waterpot. The chief mourner circumambulates round the pyre with the waterpot on his head. The *Inangan* takes his stand at the foot end of the pyre

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and cuts a hole in the pot when the chief mourner passes him. After the third round, he stops near the *Inangan* with his back to the pyre, when the *Inangan* takes hold of the pot and throws it towards the head end of the pyre where it is broken to pieces. This terminates the proceedings at the pyre for the time being. All the mourners, their relatives and the visitors bathe to purify themselves of the pollution caused by going near the corpse.

If it is not too late in the day and if crows are still about, the ritual offering of food to the departed spirit is made on the same day. Otherwise it is postponed for the morrow. The wife of the *Inangan* cleans the house and sees that all the women also bathe. The feast given that day to the people assembled is at the expense of one of the nearest affinal realtives. The ritual name of the feast is *pattaṇi kanni* (starvation gruel), for the relatives have been starving all the time since the death took place. To each of the mourners on their return after the bath the *Inangan* gives a leaf-spoon-ful of rice gruel with coconut scrapings, before drinking which the chief mourner asks, " May (we) drink the ' starvation gruel ' of my father ? " After this ceremonial breaking of the fast, the general feast follows.

Pollution caused by death is known as *pula*, a word which means impurity. The serf-castes are known as Pulayas in some areas of Malabar the obvious reference implied in the term being to their impurity in the social sense. The persons observing death pollution, *pulakkar*, have to observe various tabus. For the first fifteen days they are interdicted from participating in any communal or religious activities, from going near temples or public tanks attached to temples. The stringency of the tabus depends on the nearness of kinship with the dead person. All meat food, and among vegetable food everything that is not 'clean' have to be avoided. Smearing the body with oils, chewing betel nut, daubing the forehead and chest with sandal paste or ashes, eating anything before bathing and performing the daily rituals, eating anything but freshly cooked things, are also prohibited. The immediate kin of the dead person do not celebrate any of the usual festivals for a year from the day of death. The chief mourner is expected to carry the *sesham* with him always and not to get himself polluted by approaching men of lower castes. He is to abstain from sexual intercourse throughout the period of mourning. The widow of the dead man and his daughter who remain in the " shadow room " (*i.e.*, where the dead was first put down) have to cover their head when they go out.

Durkheim has suggested that the Australian mourners observe tabus because they regard themselves as being in a state of sacredness during the period of mourning. But among the Iravas the mourners, from the point of view of the community, are in an impure state and are, for that reason, avoided by others. The food tabus that the mourners observe are suggestive of a wish to remain pure, but they are in reality more of the nature of renunciations to show grief in a canalised manner.

The essence of the daily ritual, *patta-nātti-kriya* (frond-planted-rite), is the making of representation of the dead person and offering water and rice before it. The barber shaves the chief mourner before the latter should begin the offerings. The *Inangan* gets three stout

pieces of the branch of the erythrina tree each about a cubit in length for the barber to make an oven with for cooking the rice on. He gets him a tip of the green leaf of the coconut tree which he makes into a crude human figure. A tender coconut with the top and bottom cut straight is placed in front of the leaf-figure. The barber then places a measureful of paddy, rice, and a lighted lamp in front of the leaf-figure. Now the chief mourner returns after his bath with his wet clothes on and covering his head with the *sesham*. When the ritual begins outside, the women in the "shadow room" begin the dirge of "*enre appa o*" (oh, my father!) or "*enre amma o*" (oh, my mother!) according as the dead person is a male or female, sung monotonously in a long-winded tune. The same line is repeated till the end of the rituals. The chief mourner cooks the rice with the water that he has brought with him. Half of the cooked rice is made into a bolus and is placed on a banana leaf. From the other half a small quantity is put thrice on another piece of banana leaf placed nearer the coconut. When making these oblations the mourners have to touch the elbow of the right arm with the left hand, which is the most respectful way of giving a thing to an exalted and honoured person. The next thing offered is water which is taken on a brush made of the *karuka* (Cynodon) grass and dropped on the leaf-figure. After the chief mourner others follow him. The order usually is, first the sons, then the sisters' childern (the order is reversed in the matrilineal areas), then grandchildren, then younger brothers. Relatives older than the deceased person do not make the oblations, but only observe the *pula*. Every person who comes after the chief mourner gets the *sesham* from him and puts it on his head, and has his loin-cloth tucked up and fastened behind. When every one has finished making the oblations of rice and water, the chief mourner makes a human figure of the bolus of rice and all the mourners one after the other pour water on the figure sitting in the kneeling posture. Then the rice on the leaves is taken and offered to crows (plate ix fig. 1) which are attracted by the clapping of hands of the mourners. These birds are supposed to live indefinitely long and feeding them is believed to be equal to feeding the spirits of the departed. If the crows do not come and eat the rice readily, the mourners feel worried and fear that the spirit is displeased with something. No one on ordinary occasions claps his hands while they are wet, since it is a thing that should be done only on funeral occasions. Children doing so are severely reprimanded by their elders. When the rice is removed to be offered to the crows, it is the signal for the women to stop the dirge. The mourners bathe again before they come in. This kind of offering is repeated for a fortnight. The offerings, according to the myths of the Hindus, are firstly to invest the spirit with an ethereal body, and after it has got it, to satisfy its hunger and thirst. The women "wail" the single line dirge in the evening at about 6 p.m. and in the morning about 4 a.m., the length of the time of the "wailing" depending on the importance of the man. In the morning there is a kind of step dance with songs, known as the "*anchati-pāttu*" (five-step-song). A group of five women stand in a circle round the "shadow lamp" and singing the lines of the song, step forwards and backwards, and bend low as they come near the lamp.

Early in the morning on the fourteenth day, the women[1] conduct their rituals in the "shadow room" under the guidance of the barber woman. On the southern wall of the room she draws a human figure with rice flour. Each of the mourners then fills a ***para*** (a wooden measure) with rice and inserts in the rice the open inflorescence of the coconut tree. The barber woman and after her the mourners then do ***puja*** to the figure on the wall. The offering of a ***para*** of rice decorated with an inflorescence of the coconut tree is commonly made to the gods of the temples, and doing it for the spirit of the dead is suggestive of the new status that the deceased has attained. The concluding part of this rite is performed by the youngest of the women mourners, often the youngest of the daughters. With the ***Inangan***'s wife she goes out wailing to fetch a ***kiṇdi***[2] of water, and returning to the "shadow room", she makes a human figure with turmeric and rice flour, performs ***puja*** to it, and then pouring water and oil over it, scrubs off the figure with a few pieces of the coconut inflorescence. She collects all the materials used for the rituals, and carrying them on her head in a bell metal plate, waits near where the men are just completing their part of the rituals.

After the usual offerings, elaborately made by all the relatives who were not able to do so daily, the chief mourner pulls out the ***patta*** (leaf figure) and the erythrina sticks. In the holes left by them he pours water and oil, for symbolic purification, and fills them with earth and levels the surface. The large bolus of rice is placed on the newly prepared surface on a piece of leaf. This bolus is shaped into a crude human form. A pair of wicks which have been lighted at both the ends are waved in all the four directions and then placed crosswise on the figure in rice. Taking a vessel of water the chief mourner pours it in droplets over a gold coin and the leaves of the sacred basil. With these drops of water which acquired special purificatory powers by contact with the gold, the four flames of the two wicks are extinguished. The bolus is then removed and offered to the crows.

The youngest of the women mourners cleans the spot, after doing ***puja***, there, as she did indoors. She scoops all the materials into her bell-metal plate.

Then a small procession consisting of the chief mourner, the ***Inangan***, the youngest of the women mourners, the wife of the ***Inangan*** and the barber go to a river or pond carrying all the funerary articles (and the burnt bones[3] in the case of cremation). The chief mourner carries the bones, the ritual articles, the leaf on which the corpse was laid on the yard, and covers all these things with an umbrella. The daughter carries her bell-metal plate on her

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[1] The widow has no part in these rituals. Among the Brahmans, she has.

[2] A spouted vessel.

[3] The charred bones are collected by the chief mourner who sits facing the north and puts the fragments in the *seiham*. After he has picked up three pieces of the bones, other mourners also sit round the pyre and help him. When every fragment has been collected the washerman levels the depression and plants a plantain tree just at the spot where the chest of the corpse was. The barber now gives a mixture of nine kinds of grains to all the mourners who circumambulate thrice round the pyre, prostrate themselves at the feet end of it, and then sow the seeds. Instead of plantain tree a seedling of the coconut tree is planted on the grave in the coastal areas. The sowing of the seeds is not done in cases of interment of the dead body.

head. These articles are thrown away towards the south, the charred bones being buried in an unbaked earthenware vessel on the bank of the stream. *Puja* is done on the spot where the bones are buried.

On their return the mourners sit in a row ; the barber then pours oil on their head and sprinkles purificatory fluids made of either cowdung mixture in water, butter-milk, or water containing the bark of the four common fig trees. This ritual (plate ix, fig. 2) breaks the tabu against using oil and is therefore formally the end of the period of pollution.

On the fourteenth night the " shadow lamp " is ceremonially extinguished. The eldest daughter (or sister) lights a bundle of 101 wicks from this lamp and then blows it out. Each of the women mourners is waved over with this, and then the whole bundle is thrown into a pot containing *guruti*, a mixture of turmeric and lime. Before the light goes out, the barber lights another *arittiri* (a cloth packet of rice dipped in oil) from it and places it in a hanging brass lamp. The women again have unlighted wicks in their hands and wait round the barber. When the *arittiri* blazes, the barber dips it in another pot containing cowdung mixture in water. The *arittiri* does not go out, but floats, and from it the women light their wicks. The women throw the wicks into the cowdung mixture after waving them over their persons. Then giving presents of money to the barber they leave the room without looking back.

About 4 a.m. the same night, a large quantity of rice is cooked at the spot where the leaf-figure of the dead person used to stand. A big cotton torch is lighted and stuck up in the rice. The *Inangan's* wife carries a tender coconut with a similar torch stuck on it, the coconut being placed on a *kiṇdi*. The youngest daughter carries the pot of cooked rice. The barber ties a silk shawl on his head, carries an umbrella and sings the same kind of dirges that the women used to sing during the days of death pollution. Other mourners also join him in singing. Thrice they go round the house in procession. Just before sunrise they go to a pond or river and immerse the pot of rice in the water, the woman immersing herself in the water carrying the pot on her head.

On the fifteenth day, the house is cleaned again. All the earthen vessels are broken and new ones purchased in their place. The mourners are again sprinkled over with purifying fluids and they bathe before stepping on the verandah of the house. The *Inangan* gets some *puṇyāham* (water over which a Brahman priest has uttered spells) from an upper caste temple near by and sprinkles that also on all the mourners, to free them from pollution.

For forty-one days or for a period of one full year from the day of death the chief mourner continues to make offerings of water and rice to the departed spirit. He is then said to observe *dīksha*. He has to continue to observe all the mourner's tabus. He has in addition to grow his hair and nails, and to cook his own food. On the completion of the year (or the 41st day), food offerings are placed before a low stool (*pīṭham*) as is done in making offerings to ancestral spirits. The chief mourner then goes through a mimic of a pilgrimage to the shrine at

Tirunelli in the Wynad jungles, a place believed to confer special benefit on the spirits of the dead if their relics (such as a tooth or a piece of bone) are buried in the neighbourhood of the shrine. After this twelve ***Iṇangans*** who are ritual representatives of ancestral spirits are fed sumptuously. On one half of the leaf from which they eat, a bolus of rice is kept, and on it lighted wicks, which the chief mourner extinguishes by pouring water on to the tips of the fingers of the ***Iṇangans*** held over the wicks. Before the ***Iṇangans*** depart after receiving presents of betel leaves, sweets, coconuts, etc., the chief mourner prostrates before them. Eating at this ceremony is considered degrading and it is always only the poorest that go for it. This rite is undoubtedly an imitation of the Brahmanical rite.

The rites on the fourteenth day are most of them directed either for purifying the mourners or for removing the bad spirits. The red fluid into which the women drop the wicks waved over their persons is also used in removing evil spirits. The mixture of cowdung and water is used for purifying. The lighted wicks attract the spirits. These rites demonstrate both the fear of the spirit of the dead and the desire to free the living from being affected by it, and at the same time of purifying the spirit itself. By carrying food and light to the water a further attempt is made to remove the hovering spirit. Mingled love and fear characterises the attitude of the living to the dead.

IMITATION, BORROWING AND REFORM IN RITUALS.

In the description of mortuary rites I have been able to give only the barest outline to bring the most important points out. The enumeration of all the details would require a very large volume for themselves. The ritual elaboration is stupendous. Poorer people who do not have the means for the series of rites drop out several of them, except the offering of water and cooked food for the first fortnight.

The common features of the Namputiri and Irava rituals are listed below :—

1. Belief in a journey to the other world and ritual assistance for the journey.
2. Uttering the names of Hindu gods at the time of death.
3. Belief that death causes pollution for the living.
4. Use of turmeric, etc., for the purification of the dead body.
5. Circumambulation with the pot of water.
6. Use of a crude figure of palm leaf and offering of food and water before it, and giving food to the crows.
7. Feeding of men representing ancestral spirits.

   Certain elements in the Namputiri rituals entirely absent in the Irava rituals are the use of Vedic spells and formulae, the use of the sacrificial fire, and the ritual offering of food by the women.

To determine how much of the Namputiri rituals are their vedic rites and how much borrowed from the prehistoric natives of Malabar with whom they came in contact is beyond the scope of the present study. The chief point of interest is that except for the somewhat

specially esoteric formulae and the typical Aryan fire rites, the Iravas have made use of all the ritual wealth available to them to face the death situation. Later, when the chance came, the new class of priests trained under experts sent out from the headquarters of the spiritual leader of the Iravas supplied even the few deficiencies, namely, the Sanskrit part of death rituals, to the small minority who felt the need for them.

The desire for economy on the occasions of domestic rituals worked as a parallel force to that of elaboration on the Brahmanical ritual model. Experiments are being tried in various forms for satisfying both the needs. A new belief is growing among the more Hinduised that a simple propitiatory rite performed by a member of the new priestly order would be the equivalent of all the former rites. The feasts in connection with death rituals are being much abbreviated. Since the new order of priests are few in number, and the villagers are rather slow to change in the matter of death rituals, the traditional rites will, however, persist for some. Whereas the new marriage rituals spread everywhere in a spontaneous manner, similar enthusiasm is not noticeable for the new death rites.

Such ultra-radicals as the Iravas of the rationalist anti-Hindu camp, who are giving up death rituals entirely are only few in number, but there is every sign that they will be on the increase. It is noteworthy that in the whole of Malabar among the higher castes there has not so far been a single instance of any person not celebrating death rituals to satisfy the dictates of his intellect. These rationalists acclaim the anti-religious canons of the Bolshevists and preach and carry on propaganda against the temples.

The tendency to selective imitation revealed by the Iravas is shown in the case of the rituals connected with birth. Irava women used to undergo in the ninth month of the first pregnancy the ceremony known as *puli-ūṇu* (eating the sour things) to ensure the growth of the child and its safe delivery. Such ceremonies are losing their popularity even in rural areas, and among the Hinduised section also there is no evidence of any tendency to adapt them on true Brahman lines. Birth rituals especially those involving a belief in the impurity of the new mother are being dropped. Immediately after delivery the women used to dip themselves in cold water to purify themselves of birth pollution, but this practice is being given up. We have already seen how menstrual impurity and the necessity for its removal with the *mārru* given by the washerwoman are being ignored, and how this has had a deleterious effect on the administration of Iravan caste law. The first menstruation of girls used to be the occasion of rituals intended for removing the pollution caused by the physiological condition, for divining the future of the growing girl, and also for fattening her. The number of people who make a ceremonial occasion of menstruation is small in towns and their number is growing less in villages, where the tabus are being observed less stringently. Most of the ceremonies are becoming what might be called non-essential rites, ignored by the educated urban people, and paid progressively diminishing attention by the rural population.

The Iravas have been in close contact with Christians and Christianity for a very long time, but the Syrian Christians of Malabar formed almost a closed caste, and active evangelisation and missionary work started only when the European trade with Malabar began. In recent years, the missionaries have been indirectly of great use to the Iravas. As soon as members of the lower castes became Christians, they ceased to be regarded as "unapproachables." No longer were they under the old caste restrictions regarding dress, etc. The Hindus of Malabar feebly protested against the work of the missionaries giving privileges formerly denied them to the low caste converts. But, with the political authority of Europe behind them, the missionaries silenced opposition very easily. This provided the Iravas with a very strong argument against caste. They asked the higher castes, "Are you not regarding Christianity as a great purifier? The baptismal water, you concede, can make a low caste Hindu your equal. You are indirectly helping missionary work." In fact they were. Christianity and Islam were blessings to the lower castes as they provided an escape from the oppressiveness of caste. But the exotic and strange rituals of the Christians and the manner in which crudely rendered versions of the faith reached the rural folk through the agency of semi-educated preachers were not such as to induce in them any enthusiasm for it. The only two instances of imitation of European rituals that I have noted are the use of the wedding ring in their marriages by a handful among the most Anglicised Iravas, and the use of better coffins for carrying the corpses to the cremation grounds in Cannanore town (North Malabar), where memorial slabs are also placed on the spot where the bodies were cremated. But these items are confined to such a small number of people who have come directly under the influence of Englishmen as in a military station like Cannanore or in missionary centres, that on the whole Christian influence on rituals is negligible.

The religious reforms and temple-building activities of His Holiness Sri Narayana were aimed at making better Hindus of the Iravas. He tried to replace the fearful demons whom the majority of Iravas worshipped in their shrines by the milder Brahmanical deities. But these deities of the higher castes were already being worshipped by the Iravas from a distance in the temples owned by the former. So what the Swami did for the Iravas was nothing new from the point of view of the innate wishes in the Irava mind. Pilgrims who used to go to the distant temple at Palni were diverted to the temples now owned by the Iravas, and from the financial aspect also, temples were found to be paying concerns. Among the purely Irava temples of the old type, only one brings the management any substantial revenue; this is the temple (plate vii, fig. 1) of Muttappan in Parassini-kadavu (Chirakkal taluk, North Malabar) which attracts visitors from distant villages and even from Coorg. The Muttappan worshipped here is probably the deified spirit of an Irava hunter, but Irava myth-makers have made him an ***avatar*** of Siva. The ***torram*** or traditional versified story of the deity tells a different tale altogether. It was here that I first came to understand how myths are built up even at the present day, suppressing old ones, which in their turn, may have arisen in the place of still older ones. The actual rituals and apparatus used by the shaman of

Muttappan are susceptible to less change and they are the only historical clues that remain. Every Irava who goes to the temple is given free meals just as Brahman visitors get in high caste temples. The general prosperity of the temple is evident in the beautiful shrine, the large residential quarters of the chief priest and his assistants, and in the large amount of food cooked every day (see plate vi, fig. 3). Such temples as that Parassinikadavu are the exceptions. Even there we saw the tendency on the part of the myth-makers to give the deity a place in the Hindu pantheon by equating him with Siva. Unwilling to give up many of their folk deities, the people of Southern India have aryanised several of them. Historical research in this direction on the lines first suggested by Mr. F. J. Richards, I.C.S., in the early issues of the Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society (Bangalore) will displace many Hindu gods from the Aryan to the non-Aryan category. To return to the subject of the more popular Irava gods, the Mother-goddess of Cranganore was the best known among the higher deities. But the worship of this goddess was vitiated by the singing of the most obscene songs. (The Iravas of Cochin and Travancore recently led a vigorous campaign against the singing of these songs, and it has been nearly stopped by royal proclamation.) Kottiyur Perumal was another deity similarly worshipped in North Malabar. Sasta or Ayyappan of Sabarimala in Travancore was another god who attracted large number of pilgrims. The remarkable thing about the god of Sabarimala is that he is no respector of caste. The pilgrims going there mingle freely with one another in the vicinity of the temple. The exploits of this god are ritually enacted in rural areas even now. Local Iravan heroes, such as Mannappan in North Malabar, and Tekkan Parangodan in Central Malabar were also very commonly worshipped in domestic shrines. Mundiyan used to be worshipped for the health of cattle. The new temples were for the purpose of turning the mind of the people to a better form of worship, not of the personified evil elements of nature, but of the comforting and graceful gods of the Hindus, for whose worship and appreciation the new interest in Sanskrit learning fitted them better.

How soon small sections of the Iravas outgrew the new religious phase was indicated in the rise of a small group of Irava sanskrit scholars in North Malabar who, under the name of *ātmavidyāsangham*, carried on a propaganda against idol worship. The Arya Samajists in North India were doing the same thing in their attempt to revive vedic religion.

We have seen already that the Swami had become almost a god to his men. Many of the loyal and grateful disciples of Sri Narayana observe his birth day as a specially sacred day. They make flower offerings before his picture, and children sing hymns addressed to him. No great religious leader in India can escape being paid divine honours when alive and after death. His religious reforms led to the welding of the Iravas into one people, and to their aspirations being crystallised in the new temple. His success lay in his being himself a representative of the highest Hindu ideals of asceticism and renunciation on the one hand, and in his being able, on the other, to feel the pulse of his community at every stage in their struggle against the thraldom of caste.

CHAPTER VIII—LAW AND ORDER.

PRE-BRITISH CODES, EVIDENCE AND PROCEDURE.

Law in its wide sociological sense which has been popularised by the writings of Prof. Malinowski[1] covers all sanctioned custom or hardened usages of the community, whereas in its narrow Austinian sense its scope is restricted to such aspects of human behaviour in which the whole community is interested for its orderly progress. The Malayalam word *maryāda* is the comprehensive label applied to the various regulations that the people of Malabar regarded as being essential for the smooth working of their institutions, such as caste, family, clan, village, and included customs both "neutral" and "sanctioned". The English equivalents usually given for the word *maryāda* are, "custom", "decency", "propriety", "manners", "courtesy", "customary present", etc. *Maryāda* is divided into a broad category that contains prescriptions of universal validity, such as respect for parents, elders, teachers, etc., and into other narrower divisions that are relevant to particular castes or areas. Caste being intimately bound with privileges, many of what Prof. Malinowski has called neutral customs, such as the type of houses, the kind of dishes that a man cooks, the ornaments that he wears, become in Malabar sanctioned customs, thus extending the scope of law further into the life of the people. Again caste organization tends to extend its control into realms of individual life where there is no room for clash of interests. *Maryāda*, thus, is law in its true functional sense. We shall deal in this chapter with the changes that the old usages have undergone and relate them to the changes in belief, social organization, political authority, etc.

According to native tradition, the source of the laws of ancient Malabar was the Brahman hero, Parasurama. He made a gift of the country to the Brahmans, ordered that the men of Malabar should have a frontal tuft of hair, that the women should not cover their breasts and declared that it was no sin for the non-Brahman women to be devoid of chastity. These Brahmanical fabrications are of little interest except as rationalizations to explain the non-Aryan peculiarities of Malabar customs, and to give them mythical sanctity and support. The allocation of professions according to caste and the prescription of the proper polluting distance for each caste are popularly believed to have been based on the authority of the great Hindu philosopher Sankara, which again, we know, is another attempt at making legal myth. Law in Malabar was custom modified to some extent by the Brahmans.

At the time of the British occupation of Malabar and the coming of Cochin and Travancore under the suzerainty of the British, a local variant of Brahmanical law was being administered by the kings of Malabar. A fifteenth century compilation of Hindu law in Sanskrit, known as *Vyavahāramāla* seems to have been the chief code. It is not necessary to go in

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[1] *See* his introduction to H. J. Hogben's *Law and Order in Polynesia.*

detail into the contents of the code, as, like other codes of the Hindus, it had little reference to the real law of the non-Brahmans of Malabar. Law, according to *Vyavahāramāla*, is a means of counteracting the effects of human degeneration from a golden age of automatic obedience to authority, when lust, temper and pride, from which lawlessness arises, were held under control. The king and his learned Brahmans assisted by scribes to record statements constituted the personnel of the legal system. The court summoned witnesses and the defendants in law suits by sending them writs on palm-leaf. A creditor, however, could arrest and keep under restraint his debtor who tried to evade him, till the court summoned him. When a person gave his statement, the judge and the councillors were to watch for psychological indications of his reliability. Restlessness, touching the back of the hard palate with the tip of the tongue, contortions in the face, trembling of the lips, talking too much, looking down and drawing figures on the floor with the toe, etc., were to be regarded as marks of dishonesty. Evidence was grouped under two heads, human and divine, the latter less reliable than the former, and to be made use of only when other means of getting at the truth failed. Witnesses were, wherever possible, required to be of the same sex, caste, and status as the disputants. Giving false evidence was considered to be highly reprehensible and met with condign punishment, such as extradition, making the man go naked in public, or burning his house down. If within seven days after giving evidence a witness lost one of his close relatives, or his house caught fire or he himself fell seriously ill, he was considered as having given false evidence. Written documents formed the most important class of evidence in all disputes. A properly executed document was written either on palm leaf or copper plates, and contained the names of the immediate ancestors of the parties, the names of the scribe and of the witness. In conveying property, the executor poured water on the deed which he held in his hand and allowed the water to fall into the hands of the executee. This magico-religious legal ceremony is called *nīr-aṭṭi-peru*. A copy of an old document of 1550 A.D. that I have began with the date and place and the name of the deed ; then the gods, the authorities, the relatives of the executor, and all the world are asked to understand what is being done ; then, the name, etc., of the executee ; the description and boundaries of the property ; and lastly the most important and interesting part describing the kind of rights conveyed. The latter is a legal formula, in the untranslatable alliterative old prose, transferring every conceivable sort of right in the property, and in order not to leave any gap, includes " all the paths used by men, water courses, hills on which deer jump, streams in which fish jump, pebbles, boulders, stumps of trees, thorns, serpents, the fish in the pools, the pig in the well, etc." This elaborate wording of the old deeds made the early legal commissioners of Malabar regard the ***Janmis*** as the sole proprietors of the soil.

Supernatural evidence and its methods would occupy much space if dealt with fully. The simplest and the commonest of them was the oath. In the everyday life of the people, it is commonly resorted to in simple disputes. " If you are sure you have not said that

against me," says a woman to another, "place your hand on your child's head and say that you did not." "By my father's or mother's feet" is a common form of oath. In formal oaths for legal purposes, the parties had to fast and remain ritually pure, bathe and have wet clothes on, while invoking divine witnesses. Dipping the hand in boiling oil at a temple was the most well-known ordeal. The suspected person's finger dipped in boiling oil or *ghee* was bandaged immediately after it was withdrawn, and the judge's seal put on the bandage. The finger would be examined a week later, when, if it were found whole, the man was regarded innocent. Trial by the oil ordeal continued till the thirties of the nineteenth century. Ordeal by weighing was witnessed at Calicut about forty years ago by a member of the Madras Judicial Service in a caste dispute of the Brahmans. The accused was first weighed dry, and then, wet, after dipping himself water. If he weighed less the second time, it was divine proof of his innocence. The judicial officer records that to his surprise he saw the pan of the big balance on which the judicial victim sat, a picture of misery, go up, while he expected it to go down with the added weight of the water. Other ordeals, such as the poison ordeal, the ordeal of making a suspect swim across a river infested by crocodiles, etc., are mentioned in the code, but of them our knowledge is meagre

The characteristic Malabar methods of settling disputes do not find a place in the *Vyavahāramāla*. Trial by battle, ***ankam***, was a method of settling protracted disputes. The parties hired skilled fencers and the person whose fencer won had the dispute settled in his favour. The fighting was conducted under the supervision of the local ***deśāvāri***. Vendetta as a method of settling feuds was recognized, if the evidence from folk-lore and linguistic usages is to be believed. The chief of the village interfered in a peculiar manner when a person was killed in such a feud. He would take the dead body to the enemies' house, put it in an outhouse and set fire to the building.

SANCTIONS.

Obedience to authority was enforced by a careful system of delegation of administrative power through the channel of caste, the joint family and local chiefs. There was no centralised authority, and no elaborate organization for the dispensation of justice. Theft was sought to be suppressed by very severe deterrent punishment. Travellers in Malabar such as Ibn Batuta, Abdurrazak, Varthema, and Pyrard de Laval were unanimous in their praise of the honesty of the Malabar people and the efficiency with which law was enforced in the country, especially in the town of Calicut. Merchants could leave their goods on the roadside without any fear of their being lost. Death, mutilation, and mangling were the punishments for even simple offences such as stealing a coconut. The native saying, "If a young fellow steals, his little finger must be cut," has its origin in the ancient penal sanctions of the country. The effectiveness of law was helped very much by the extreme simplicity of the legal procedure. Just as there was no legislator outside the village all the sanctions

could be applied within the village. For collecting debts, for example, there was the method of "sitting *pād*." The creditor or the person employed by him went to the debtor with an umbrella and a conch shell, and starved in front of his house. If the man refused to clear the debt in spite of this the villagers boycotted him. This old method has been made a crime in the Indian Penal Code, because it was thought the Brahmans misused it to extort money from the villagers. It is still resorted to by villagers in a less formal fashion, but "sitting *pād*" is now only a kind of long waiting for hours and days in front of the debtors' house.

Not only the severity of the punishment, but the wide and varied nature of the sanctions helped the growth of lawfulness. Sanctions which the individual is trained to regard with awe from his early life, and which are strengthened by beliefs ingrained in him, have greater value than those vested in an exotic authority however powerful it is. Evasion of punishment is extremely difficult in the former case. Public approval and disapproval were very important in helping comformity to custom. The fear of public criticism acts as a deterrent especially in close knit village communities. A law-abiding man is praised as "knowing *maryāda*." There is a belief that evil, unlawful, hard-hearted actions would visit a man with diseases, and that he would not be able to die a good death. Hence such statements as the following: "He was a man without blood in his eyes (*i.e.*, cruel), and, when he died, he did so without being able to take in a drop of water." Many believe strongly that divine justice will be meted out even if earthly justice fails. Such, it is said, was the case in an incident that took place in a village a few years ago. A Nayar youth tried to murder his tyrannical uncle (mother's brother), but the latter escaped with a slight wound. The police investigated into the case and an old Irava who had a quarrel with the wounded Nayar was suspected of the crime and was sentenced to penal servitude. It was an instance of miscarriage of justice of which many could be heard from all Indian villages, and which shakes the belief of the masses in the sort of justice that the costly judicial machinery of the country now dispenses. A few months later, the Nayar youth became mentally deranged, and the villagers began to comment on it: "The poor old man is now in the Cannanore Central Jail for the offence committed by this fellow. He had money and men to help him through in the court. But there is somebody above seeing everything. He has His own court where no lawyers can win with their logic." God thus to these villagers is the impersonation of law.

As an extension of the belief in divine sanctions, magical means are resorted to for private vengeance. Magic is used for the protection of garden produce, and also to punish the thief. The village astrologer acts as the diviner, and his divination very often follows the public opinion of the village and supports it, though it makes grievous mistakes through the astrologer's misreading of the situation. Even modern courts respect the wish of parties who sometimes agree to settle a dispute by "putting it for oath" in the presence of some of

their gods or goddesses. In some cases, when villagers find that without proper documents they cannot get back through the courts their money given to a dishonest person on trust, they go to a temple and "pray." An offering is made and the aggrieved party states the case to the shaman of the temple. The belief is that the deity of the temple would cause great calamities to befall the guilty man till he consults an astrologer. These astrologers have their circumlocutory way of stating their findings without committing themselves definitely and the result is that the task of interpreting what the astrologer says is left to the person who consults him, and the slightest suggestions are sufficient to terrify him. Or sometimes the fact of the creditor's having sought divine intervention gets communicated to him through village gossip, though as a matter of course, it is kept a secret. Any calamity or sickness that follows is then attributed to the "prayer," and the aggrieved person is either paid in full or otherwise satisfied and requested to "withdraw the prayer." Such "judicial" deities are always fearful and dangerous ones, and under normal circumstances few people like to have anything to do with them.

Another interesting custom worth mentioning in this connection is the practice of making gifts to Brahmans to wash away sins. This belief should have been of considerable relief to many hard sinners and criminals, who could in its absence find little solace in the face of divine sanctions.

The young children of Malabar households used to be educated to appreciate the benefits of obedience to authority and custom in the same informal manner in which they were taught the lessons of life in other aspects of their cultural heritage. "If you urinate in the public pond in which people bathe, you will be punished in after life by being asked to bale out the water of a big ocean with the husk of a paddy grain." This was the manner in which a simple sanitary rule was impressed on the children. "If you defaecate on a public thoroughfare, you will get boils on your fundament." This warning was necessary to prevent children putting the footpaths to bad use. "If you are cruel to the cat, it will not help you in crossing the narrow bridge, after your death, in your passage to the other world." Such sayings to inculcate some ethical or hygienic rules, all of them with some simple sanctions behind them were characteristic of Hindu India. They were, of course, not deterrent, but did help in achieving the end in view. Children were, as a rule, harshly treated and obedience was enforced with the free use of the rod. Rules of etiquette were acquired *in a* similar way. But the most interesting point in this connexion was the surprising rapidity with which they acquired the peculiar vocabulary of caste usage.

HINDU PRACTICES AND INDO-BRITISH LAW.

Rules of caste, as we saw in an earlier chapter, insisted on an ambivalent norm of behaviour characterised by abject humility in the presence of members of superior castes, and assertive snobbery and insolence in the presence of those of inferior castes. In order

to maintain the differences in privileges, caste law put its feet strongly on any attempt at innovation or imitation of one caste by another. Any inroad on an individual's caste prerogatives by a member of an inferior caste was an offence against the whole of the group to which the former belonged. An Irava who polluted a Nayar could, according to the accounts of travellers, be hacked down by the Nayar. Since the Irava in his turn exercised similar prerogatives against others below him, he did not see that the caste system meant something hard for him. How institutions introduced by the English weakened caste, we have already seen. In the sphere of law, especially in the earlier days when it was their rule not to give too much respect to the sentiments of the orthodox, the British courts supported the human rights of the lower castes against the privileges of the higher. This was inevitable as the spirit that informed the judiciary was democratic and hence opposed to the steep gradations of caste and its inhumanity towards those that were at its bottom. This legal appreciation of the human rights of the lower castes was as important as the other forces such as the economic and educational influences that undermined caste in Malabar. Caste that once permeated the economic, political and administrative aspects of the life of the people of Malabar receded first from the political and administrative spheres, then from the typically British institutions, then from the public thoroughfares, and is now tending to be confined to marriage and to a lesser extent to eating. By setting a new norm and enforcing conformity to it not by penal sanctions but with their prestige, the English were directly responsible for the impetus that they gave to the movement against caste. This should be regarded as an instance of active acculturation, as contrasted with the slow changes in the family and kinship systems. If, like the Jesuits in South India, the British Government had attempted to seek the easier path of placating the orthodox stricklers of caste, it is doubtful if we could ever have seen the Iravas fight for their human rights.

ADMINISTRATION OF CASTE REGULATIONS.

In the internal organisation of the caste of the Iravas, caste law was administered by the Tandan. When the political authority of native ruling castes that backed him failed, the Tandan automatically lost his also. On account of the inertia of custom, it is not possible for an institution to be paralysed suddenly ; so, the Tandan continued to exercise his functions for several decades after the establishment of the British rule. In a classification of sanctioned customs from the angle of caste, we can distinguish a body of them for which sanctions are applied by the Tandan or in his absence by the local caste group. If an Irava borrowed money from another Irava, or a member of some other caste and failed to repay it, his caste is not concerned about his delict ; on the other hand, if the same individual did not pay the customary contribution to functions organised by the Tandan on behalf of his people, or if he failed to perform the caste rituals in the prescribed manner at the proper time, or ate in forbidden company or slept with women of forbidden castes, these were matters

in which his peers sought to control and correct him. In this respect caste resembled a guild interested in the integrity and purity of the organisation. On account of its complexity caste law is difficult to be codified under a few general heads, and equally impossible to be administered except by a small village community as the *tara* used to be. This explains why in the formal codes of law, caste law is ignored, and left to the members of the respective castes themselves. The caste government used to work so quietly that even neighbouring castes knew practically little of what was going on within the ranks of each other.

The interesting procedure adopted by the Tandan and elders of a *tara* in caste disputes have been described already in an earlier section (p.). Denying an offender the privileges of the caste, which were implied in the right of commensalism and the right of commanding the services of the washerman and the barber, in other words, excommunication, was the most powerful weapon wielded by caste law. Before the introduction of Christianity and Muhammadanism into Malabar, excommunicated persons became slaves. In North Malabar there is even now a settlement of excommunicated persons at a place known as Kudiyan Mala in the inaccessible jungles on the Coorg frontier of Malabar. The Mannanar was the overlord and protector of the residents of the settlement. They were no longer known by their old caste name, but by the new name, *Kudiyān*. They were slaves, and intermarried among themselves. Ancient Hindu law prohibited courts hearing any disputes brought by an excommunicated person, as he had no civil status. Christianity and Muhammadanism offered excommunicated men and women the shelter of their faith and society. Emigration to distant countries or running away to the towns where their identity would be lost became a new means of escape during recent years.

I propose to illustrate by a series of concrete examples the working of caste law :—

1. *Marrying a relative within the prohibited degree of kinship.*—Mr. K—, an advocate in Cannanore in the Chirakkal taluk of North Malabar, married on his first wife's death, her younger sister, hoping that his children by the first wife would have an affectionate step-mother. Local custom prohibits sororate. Being an influential lawyer in an urban area, K— did not care for the disapproval expressed by the elders of his local caste group. They excommunicated him in the usual manner. He appealed to the larger body of elders of sixty-four villages, but they also upheld the decision of the local group. He was thus isolated in the town. His eldest daughter became a Christian, but did not change her Hindu name, went to America where she qualified herself as a surgeon, and is now a flourishing practitioner. The other children did not change their religion, and by the time they became adults, the Iravas had so far outgrown their old law that the fact of their excommunication was ignored and they are now honoured members of the community. The memory of their father is respected as that of a pioneer in reforms.

2. *Mating with a woman of a prohibited caste and then changing his faith.*—At village O—, a young Irava fell in love with the daughter of the local carpenter. He eloped with her to Calicut town, where the missionaries converted both of them, and made them man and wife and gave them work in the cotton mills run by them. When some one from a family is outcasted, or becomes a Christian, his relatives remaining within the fold of the caste have to treat him as though he were dead, and this they do by celebrating his "death rituals." None of the actual rituals are however gone through, though the feast is known as a death-feast, and is of the nature of a public affirmation of the fact of the family being pure, though one of them has gone out. In this case, the father of the man who had become a Christian refused for some time to celebrate the death rites of his living son. He said, "My son is living. Is it not cruel to ask me to give his death feast?" But his perfectly good logic did not help him long. He had a daughter fast approaching marriageable age. The elders of the village threatened that they would see that no one married his daughter. This threat brought him round and he gave a formal feast.
3. *Non-performance of rituals.*—The form of mock marriage known as *tālikettu kalyanam* (pp.) had become quite meaningless about half a century ago, but tradition continued it in existence. At village S—, in the Walluvanad taluk of South Malabar, R—, an enlightened Irava, though himself the Tandan of his *tara*, refused to conduct the *tālikettu* rite for his daughter. This was in response to a reform movement to stop all rituals that did not seem to have any obvious significance. The punishment inflicted by caste on a girl who menstruates before she has undergone the rite is said to be excommunication, but no instance has come to my notice of such excommunication. R—told his friends, "If for the non-observance of this meaningless rite, my daughter will not be able to get a husband, let her remain unmarried." The orthodox men carried their complaint against the Tandan to the great Nayar chief of the area, who was the landlord of R—. The chief sought to compel obedience by threatening to evict R—of certain property he had on simple lease from the Nayar. R— remained adamant, and so the chief carried out his threat. Though he was thus a loser for his adherence to the principles of reform, he got the approbation of the leaders of his community for setting a good example to others. R—'s daughter, however, got married to a practitioner of native medicine. The chief interest in this case is that the Tandan himself was the offender, and the older orthodox members of his local group with the Nayar landlord were the prosecuting party.

Offences relating to sex.—Opportunities for sexual contacts outside wedlock are extremely limited among the Iravas. The theoretical purity of caste blood is of such importance to the members of each caste, that legal control of sex relations is of prime importance. Among the cases that the caste court has to deal with, sex has the largest share, and

creates the greatest sensation. Incest, adultery withinthe caste, etc., are of little moment compared to the storm raised by womanhaving sexual intercourse with men of lower castes. If a man has illicit intercourse with a woman of an inferior caste, the offence is slight, because the purity of his caste is not affected by it, but the sexual offence of women affects the caste purity. Public opinion is strong on this subject, and the loss of prestige is so great that it acts as a deterrent. Early marriage was the device by which sexual offences that would affect the purity of caste were sought to be prevented.

How the Iravan law-givers care only for the letter and not the spirit of their law is shown by the method of legitimisation adopted by them. If an unmarried girl becomes pregnant, it is considered a serious offence only if no member of the caste can be found who will accept the legal responsibility for her condition. No respectable man will do so, if he is not really responsible for the pregnancy. There are, however, some lazy unscrupulous idlers, contemptuously known as ***garbham tāngikal*** (supports for the load of illegitimate pregnancy), who make a profession of legitimisation of illegitimate conceptions.

> *Case history.*—In village M—, an unmarried young woman, K —, became pregnant. The villagers came to know that she had two paramours, one an Irava, and the other a fisherman. She was an orphan, and some of the villagers who were charitably disposed towards her wanted to force the Irava youth to marry her. As the young fellow knew of her liaison with the fisherman, and as she was older than himself, he could not brook the idea of marrying her. But he undertook to get a legitimiser and meet the expenses of K—'s nominal marriage with him. A legitimiser was got for a fee of Rs. 10, and the bare outlines of a marriage ceremony were gone through. Pocketing his fee the legitimiser quitted the place immediately. By this fiction of a marriage, K— remains an Irava. A daughter was born to her, but the stigma on its birth will cling to the little one for ever. The theory behind this strange legal figment emphasises the rights of a member of the caste. The community is satisfied that a member of it has shouldered the responsibility for the birth of a new member, but the moral stigma which is the punishment for the women's breaking a very important rule of the caste, remains, and is everlasting. " Spontaneously generated " is the term of abuse applied to the children legitimated in the manner described here. " ***Vīttil pirappu*** " is the term of contempt for persons born as a result of the premarital sexual relation between their parents, who married subsequent to the impregnation. The literal meaning of the term is " born in the (mother's) house." It is of course a mild term compared to the former.

A man who has illicit intercourse with a woman of a lower caste is only ridiculed now, whereas, if a case became notorious, he used formerly to be asked to take a purificatory bath

and pay a fine. An Irava who had a liaison with a Vettuva woman was throughout his life known by a nick-name made by prefixing her name to his.

The laws relating to the eating of cooked food prepared only by one's own caste men or by members of superior castes and never by those of inferior castes is breaking down rapidly. Public opinion of the village is growing weaker and weaker against the rules regarding food. On the other hand, in the matter of sex, the strength of public opinion, though whittled down, is still great and though the old sanctions cannot be applied, offenders meet with the old kind of ridicule, contempt, and opprobrious language.

In dealing with the domestic law of the Iravas, we shall begin with marriage laws. Any association between a man and woman of the Irava caste provided they were beyond the prohibited degree of kinship for marriage, could be regarded as legal. Even if a child were born of such a union before the formal marriage ceremony, legitimacy was established beyond question if the man accepted in public in the presence of the members of the *tara* that the child was his. About a quarter of a century ago, in the central patrilineal area, it was customary for betrothed couple to be allowed to live as husband and wife just as though marriage was matrilocal. The formal marriage ceremony generally took place before the first child was born. Marriage therefore really began with the betrothal. An analogous custom prevails in North Malabar. Without the formal ceremony of marriage in the presence of the caste men assembled, a man may mate with a woman with the consent of her relatives. But if he wanted to take her to his house, he may do so only after celebrating the public ceremony of marriage. This form of marriage is generally of help to the poor who find it often difficult to raise sufficient money for the big feasts, which alone can give the matrilocal partner the full status of a wife. The "earnest money" or *kanam* also has to be paid before the matrilocal wife will be allowed to be taken to the husband's household. While legality is established by the consent of the man and woman and their immediate relatives, the further exchanges are obviously for raising the status of the wife. Every transaction in the course of the marriage from the betrothal to the marriage rite is supposed to create a particular relationship. When the parties agree to the marriage, they partake of a feast at the girl's house. This feast, though a very grand one, is called "drinking gruel", and it creates the tie known as the "gruel relationship." This is common to the matrilineal and patrilineal areas. The next is peculiar to North Malabar, and is known as the "betel relationship." It is created by the bridegroom's party distributing betel leaves to the local group and kin of the bride. The cloth and other wearing apparel given by the bridegroom to the bride generates the "thread relationship", and the earnest money deposited by the bridegroom, the "*kanam* relationship." The first two of these links are between the larger kinship groups of the parties in marriage, the third between the bride and bridegroom only, and the fourth between the immediate kin of both. In the ceremony connected with divorce, it is the "thread relationship" that is ceremonially revoked, because it is

the real tie. The " earnest money " is simply returned, and the remaining ties require no formal or ritual revocation. The husband during divorce takes a piece of thread from his cloth and burning its middle, blows the two pieces away saying to the brother of the woman, " Here, your sister's *ăchāram*." The word *acharam* commonly means custom, but in the present context appears meaningless. It is however explained by the ritual act that accompanies it, and the two put together are tantamount to his saying, " Hereby the thread tie is snapped, and with it my customary rights over the woman as her husband terminate." Remarriage of a woman who has separated herself from her first husband cannot take place without the latter formally terminating his rights. In addition to returning the dowry, the husband in Travancore on divorcing his wife had to pay her compensation for her loss of virginity. Caste law so far as it relates to the Iravas has never been taken to a British court of law. But in the case of the Nayars the right of the social head of the caste to punish a member of the caste by depriving him of some of his privileges, such as making use of the temple, and the temple tank, has been questioned in courts of law, and the decisions have been such as to belittle the authority of caste.

LEGAL REFORMS.

The new courts under the influence of Hindu law, to which matrilineal inheritance of the people of Malabar was foreign, questioned the legality of the marriage of the matrilineal Iravas. It was considered to be mere concubinage, as it had none of the essential rituals of Hindu marriage, and did not make the children of the union the natural heirs of the man. A few legally-minded men of the matrilineal castes felt sorry that their marriage system was labelled as " concubinage ", and worked to get the Malabar Marriage Commission appointed to go into the question of the legality of the traditional forms of marriage and to suggest legislative measures. The result of the enquiry was the Malabar Marriage Act (1896) which made provision for the registration of the marriage of matrilineal castes. The law was merely permissive, and though it remained on the statute book for nearly four decades, it is interesting to note that none except a few enthusiasts took the trouble of getting their marriages registered. The fate of this legislative enterprise showed that it was absolutely superfluous, and that matrilineal communities regarded their marriage legal and valid, in spite of the opinion of the legal *pandits*. The Malabar Marriage Act made the mistake of looking at the problem from a wrong angle ; reform, if any, was necessary in the rules of inheritance, but the time was not then rife for legitimate changes in the organisation of the matrilineal family.

A series of changes have been taking place in the joint families of Malabar during the last few decades. In matrilineal joint families the great disruptive force was the clash between the claims of the natural heirs and the legal heirs. Customary law gave the Karanavan unlimited powers, partition of the family property was not permitted, and matrilineal law ignored the father completely except for the purpose of reproduction. As in actual

practice, however, the Karanavans misused their authority and impoverished this heirs, and fathers were anxious to benefit their children, the Iravas of Travancore established a new convention of dividing a man's self-acquired property equally between his legal and natural heirs. The control and protection of the wife and children slowly passed from the Karanavan to the husband and father. There was now real need for the state to recognise these changes and legislate accordingly to bridge the gulf between what the people thought was right and what the antiquated law prescribed. Popular clamour for legislation to recognise the claims of the matrilineal wife and children led to the Irava Regulation (1925) in Travancore, and the Madras Marumakkattayam Act of 1932 for Malabar district.

The Travancore Regulation legalised the claims of the wife and children for the whole of a man's self-acquisition, transferred the guardianship of the children from the Karanavan to the father, permitted the *per capita* division of the joint family estate, and made provision for divorce with compensation to be paid by the party, whether man or woman, petitioning for divorce. This regulation destroyed the basis of the joint family and the matriarchal systems. The Madras Act followed the Travancore Irava Regulation very closely, but made the registration of marriage compulsory. The registration was made a simple affair, as it required the parties to fill up a form and post it to the administrative head of the taluk in which they lived, while under the Act of 1896 the parties were required to be present before the Marriage Registrar. Thus, to the rituals of marriage is now added the written word of the civil contract to make sanctions easily enforcible through courts of law. Under the old caste regime state influence in the domestic life of individuals was practically negligible, but the new acts have made it prodigious. The immediate result has been the invocation of the courts for maintenance and divorce. Any old fashioned Irava has every reason to feel shocked when he sees his grand-daughter going to the court, filing a divorce petition, paying damages to her husband, and getting a decree of separation ? How different is this from the burning of the thread and giving compensation for the loss of virginity ? But the people are happy that their human cravings are satisfied, that the Karanavan can no longer exploit his heirs, and restrictions are placed on free divorce.

The patrilineal Iravas are being governed by Hindu law subject to slight modifications by their local customs. One important point concerns the right of women to inherit their father's property, which under Hindu law they cannot. In some test cases, expert witnesses of the Irava caste were of opinion that with regard to the right of inheritance of women, Irava customary law was in substantial agreement with the provisions of Hindu law. We saw in an earlier chapter the great disabilities suffered by unmarried women and young widows of the Irava caste in the patrilineal area. A sonless widow has no hold on her husband's family and so has to return to her brothers, to remain an unwelcome guest of the brothers' wives. A bill introduced and passed in the Cochin Legislative Council to give women the

right to inherit half a man's share of the paternal property was vetoed by the Government of His Highness the Maharajah.

As a result of the increased responsibility shouldered by the husband and father, we might say that the bonds within the biological family have strengthened. Legislation only helped the tendency that was being favoured by the new economic and cultural forces. Formerly, in a matrilineal family, a woman usually was more subject to the head of her "house" than to her husband. But now the husband is rapidly taking that place of authority. Many a marriage in which the husband and wife were happy and attached to each other had, in olden days, to be annulled forcibly when the heads of their ramages quarrelled. Such light-hearted treatment of the marriage tie is becoming rarer and rarer everyday. Married life in Irava society is happier today than it has ever been, and legislation has helped it.

The new orientation of kinship sentiments is reflected in the weakening of the kinship ties outside the biological family and the perfunctory manner in which the obligations to the larger kinship groups are being fulfilled. The endless series of gifts and exchanges tire moderns, and they are being replaced by voluntary presents. The ritual aspects of gifts is forgotten, for example, a relative-in-law who should according to the old custom bring bunches of bananas for the death feast simply drops the idea of doing it, staying to himself, "I shall not take the trouble. When there is a similar feast in my house let them not bring the customary gifts." This loss of mutuality in social life is felt in the economic sphere where the burden that each individual has to bear unhelped by his kin is increasing human suffering. Those presents which fulfilled not only an economic function, but also that of continuously cementing the ties of blood and affinity, could no longer look realistic when the kinship basis on which they were founded were being reformed with the father and husband as its most important nucleur point.

THE NEW COURTS AND THEIR WEAK POINTS.

What did the new British courts do for the Iravas? How did they react to them? How far are they efficient? At the beginning of the last century, under the inflence of the British Government, the administration of law took an entirely new shape throughout Malabar. The Mysore wars had weakened rural government so much that the Nayar chiefs had given way to state officials in the native states in British Malabar they had become completely demoralized. The presence of the fanatical Muhammadans proved another obstacle to the peaceful and orderly conduct of the old form of rural governance. A new police force to replace the Nayar militia, new judicial officers most of them combining revenue work with their legal functions, trained lawyers, jails and imposing court houses—all these appeared in the three political divisions of Malabar. The civil code of the new courts was Hindu law combined with the customary laws of each caste. The Indian Penal Code, the

new code of criminal law of the land, made the most revolutionary change. Offences against caste, witchcraft, etc., were no longer within the purview of law. Ordeals were similarly dropped out, though not without a protest from the queen of Travancore. At the time when Col. Munro was organising the new judicial department of Travancore and Cochin, the Rani insisted on the oil-ordeal being included in the new system of law. The colonel pointed to Her Highness that the ordeal which had a deterrent effect on a 'cruel and avaricious' people was of use only when there was no other judicial system. The police known to the older generation of the people of Malabar as "men of the new law" replaced the vigilance of the villagers, the astrological skill of the village diviner, and the protective magic of the magicians. Punishments were made comparatively mild, fines and imprisonment replacing loss of limbs, impalement, mutilation, and the wrath of gods and black magic. English became the language of judiciary as it was in other departments of the new administrative system. The cumbrous procedure involved as a rule great expenses and loss of time. Honest witnesses, so essential especially in the administration of criminal law, were extremely difficult to get, and the work of the new police was therefore full of difficulty. Not only had the jails no terrors for the criminals, society did not condemn a jail bird. The complexity of the work of the court, the use by judges and advocates of a language not known to the majority of the litigants, and the presence of the larger number of touts and other parasites of the judiciary, all these unfortunate circumstances lead the villagers generally to regard the courts with fear. Persons well-versed in the mysteries of litigation are a terror to the villagers. They might discover a weak point in some transaction or other which an innocent man has made, and prey upon the ignorance of the latter. Lawyers tutoring their witnesses, and persons uttering the blackest of lies after solemn oath are such common incidents that the villagers do not regard courts as an institution dispensing justice. They say, "These are not courts of truth, but are courts of logic." In a judicial system in which the people think they have no share or part to play, and expect an external authority to do justice, the result cannot be very hopeful. With an ignorant public, and a constabulary of equally ignorant and uneducated men, the administration of criminal law is similarly inefficient. To these handicaps caste adds another. If a magistrate is of a particular caste, there is a natural suspicion that he might favour persons of his own caste. Being a member of a certain caste, he cannot help his associates being mostly of his own caste, and to overcome a feeling of caste brotherhood requires great mental discipline.

CHAPTER IX.—IRAVAS MAKING HISTORY.

The last two decades have seen the culmination and crystallization of most of the tendencies that have been so far noted among the Irava. Along with Indian nationalism, caste nationalism also has been growing. The Iravas now grown stronger by their recent organizations were no longer satisfied with accepting the slow changes effected by environmental and external forces, but wanted to speed up changes by legislation, and by creating public opinion in their favour by propaganda through the press and through conferences and petitioning to the authorities. It is interesting to note that the Iravas were the first to adopt Gandhi's method of passive resistance for the establishment of their civic rights regarding the use of public thoroughfares and public places of worship. As the non-intervention policy of the British in socio-religious matters became more marked, and the voice of the people grew stronger in local government, it was necessary for the Iravas to be more assertive in their demands.

Indian nationalism had another important sociological significance for the Iravas. The educated sections among the upper castes grew more sympathetic towards their aspirations for what were regarded as elementary human rights. The caste clashes of the earlier decades had estranged the relationship between the educated members of the Nayar and the Irava castes, between the Nayars and the Brahmans, and so on, which was inevitable. The Iravas as a group were suspicious of the higher caste nationalists and were for the continuation of British dominance in India. "But for the British what would be the condition of our people?" ask the older Iravas, and each tells of the difficulties that he has experienced on account of caste. One of the Irava leaders asked his people to fight against the enemies of Britain in India, to show how grateful they are to the Government for the benefits conferred upon the low caste Hindus. The fear that on the withdrawal of the British from a position of supreme authority and the taking of the reins of government by Indians (which means upper-caste Hindus), the Iravas' position might grow worse, and that there might be a reversion to the old pre-British conditions, was quite genuine, especially in the minds of the elderly men. The nationalists were however anxious to show that such suspicion was unfounded. Some of them dropped titles indicating caste and rank, others inter-dined with Iravas and other lower castes, and in the passive resistance movement against temple laws (p.), Brahman and Nayar leaders and volunteers co-operated and courted jail as members of one fraternity with the Iravas. So there is the beginning of nationalism in Malabar acting as a re-integrative force, but the reintegration is not on the old model of caste, but on the new democratic basis. There are also indications of the national spirit acting as a new cohesive force in the place of the lost traditions of the old village life. Caste nationalism which had for its purpose the gaining of the legitimate rights of the members of each caste is also on the decline.

Though nationalism is helpful to the Iravas now, the initiative and the early efforts for changing caste laws had to come from the Iravas themselves. We saw that they were the first among the various castes of the Malayalam-speaking country to have a communal association of theirs to voice their opinions. A century ago they had no place in politics and in administration. To-day in Travancore, there are Iravas as heads of administrative departments, and several Iravas sit in the legislative councils. Three nationalist Iravas are members of the new legislative assembly of Madras. They were unapproachables, but today in Travancore, all the bigger temples are open to them, and except in the rural areas, custom and caste no longer interfere with their rights of using public thoroughfares. Formerly the highest learning that an Irava could aspire for was a few rudiments of the vernacular, but today there are women Vedic scholars among them. These are tremendous changes viewed in their proper historic perspective. The Iravas had to struggle to some extent to bring about these changes, but the struggles were made possible by the effects of the contact with Europeanism.

We shall briefly review the last phases of organized culture-changing efforts of the Iravas. The Iravas who had got themselves educated in the earlier days found it difficult to get appointments in the native states and had to seek employment under the British. An Irava medical man and another Irava graduate who were told that they would not be entertained in Travancore State service went out of the State and rose to positions of eminence. This Irava medical man, Dr. Palpu, was the political father of the Iravas of the native states. He collaborated with Sri Narayana and became the first secretary of the S.N.D.P. Association of the Iravas, which from a mere socio-religious organization became a political organization. The three things that the association wanted were that educated Iravas should be given work under the government just as the Nayars and Brahmans were, and that all public thoroughfares in the vicinity of temples and palaces should be thrown open to the Iravas and that their children should not be denied admission in schools on the plea that the school was near a temple, etc. In the Cochin State where the Iravas were less organized and economically more backward than those of Travancore, the growing self-respect of these people was being wounded in various ways by the State authorities. It is reported that in one of the schools of the State, Irava boys who were already attending a school were sent away when a few princes of the royal family were expected to be admitted to the school. (In the British Malabar district the Iravas were encouraged by the British authorities, and, in this respect, they were much better off than their fellow caste men in the Hindu states). Dr. Palpu's method consisted in drawing the attention of the British authorities to the iniquitous state of affairs in the native states and thus to lead them to follow the example of the authorities of British Malabar. Petitioning to the Rajahs was very often productive of little results. At the beginning of the present century the Iravas had their first newspaper started in British Malabar. This paper, the *Mitavadi* (The Moderate Advocate) which had as its motto

" Educate that you may be free, organize that you may be strong," has done much to shape Irava public opinion. For a long time the term *Mitavadi* was the equivalent in Malayalam for newspaper. The paper used to contain long discourses on what the Iravas should do to improve themselves, long tirades against the atrocities of caste, and hearty praise of the British rulers of India. Its vehement criticism of the customary waste of public money in Travancore and Cochin on giving presents to Brahmans and on grand rituals of state made it very unpopular among the higher castes. When the nationalist agitation in India took an anti-British turn, this paper used to contain the most unsparing criticism of Gandhi and his followers. When the efforts to get the temples opened for the low castes failed in the first instance the editor of the Mitavadi revived the old idea, first suggested by an Irava in North Malabar, that mass conversion from Hinduism to a new faith was the best solution for the caste troubles from which the Iravas suffered. What should be the new religion was the subject of long controversies. Some were attracted by the democratic spirit of Islam, others by the wealth and power of the Christians, and yet others by the high ethics and simple rationalism of Buddhism. The threat that Iravas would leave Hinduism and strengthen the already strong Christians of Travancore was not without its effect on the higher caste Hindus of the State. Those who knew the mass-mind of the Iravas better realized that mass conversion would be an impossibility. So they said that they would cut themselves off from the Hindus, make the Governments recognize the fact that they were no longer Hindus, and thus remain an independent group observing no caste rules and willing to admit anyone into their group. The only comment necessary on these various suggestions made from time to time by Irava leaders is that they expressed the dissatisfaction of the Iravas with the social organization of the Hindus, and every suggestion meant a protest against it.

The recent history of the Iravas is mainly the history of the work of two of the younger leaders, the late Mr. T. K. Madhavan in Travancore, and of Mr. K. Aiyappan in Cochin State. Disgusted with ineffective pleading and petitioning for rights in the manner that was fashionable with the older generation of Irava leaders, Mr. Madhavan, a born organiser, determined to begin organising a fight for the recognition of the rights of the Iravas as Hindus of using the temples. The self-respect of the Iravas required that that should be done. The more advanced elements among the Nayars were in favour of it, but the Governments, the courts, and the orthodox Brahmans formed a united front against the Iravas getting this right. It is interesting to see what the legal position was in this matter. The Indian Penal Code contained no definite provisions against the lower castes entering the temples of the upper castes provided the latter were public temples, but defiling a place of worship was a crime. In one of the earliest cases heard in Southern India under this particular section, the European judge of the High Court held that a man of the lower castes entering a temple and worshipping in a prescribed fashion cannot cause defilement, but the Brahman

judge who sat with him supported the orthodox view by maintaining that the defilement referred to in the code was ritual defilement and not defilement in the secular sense of the term. The opinion of this orthodox Brahman judge has been the basis of all the subsequent decisions given by the courts in dealing with pollution of temples. To change this judge-made law which was perhaps against the spirit of the Indian Penal Code, new legislation and the creation of public opinion in its favour were both imperatively necessary. Without the help of the sister communities Mr. Madhavan felt that the Iravas could not undertake passive resistance against the laws restricting the rights of temple entry for the lower castes. Moreover the Iravas were on the whole doubtful of the efficacy of this Gandhian instrument of civil disobedience. But Madhavan with the blessing of Gandhi and the support of the Congressmen of Malabar started *satyagraha* at the Vaikam temple in Travancore in the year 1924. One of the roads near the temple was not open to the Iravas on the ground that it was very near the temple. Batches of volunteers composed mostly of Iravas marched to the barricade put up by the police to prevent their entry to the prohibited area, and on being disallowed to proceed further, stood near the barricade till they were arrested. The struggle at Vaikam lasted twenty months in all, during the course of which Madhavan and his Nayar, Christian and Brahman friends who offered passive resistance were imprisoned. In those days when civil disobedience as a political weapon was less known, the strange drama that was being enacted at Vaikam focussed the attention of the whole of India on it. When Gandhi called off the *satyagraha* the next year, nothing had been achieved except publicity for the cause of the Iravas. The road in question was closed and a new one was constructed a little further up, which could be used by the Iravas. But the moral effect of the campaign on the public of Malabar was very great. Years later another congressman of British Malabar—a Nayar by caste— starved himself almost to death to force the trustee of one of the largest of the Hindu temples to open it to Iravas and the castes below them. It created great sensation in the country, but the trustee remained adamant in spite of the best efforts to influence his opinion. This trustee is a descendant of the old Rajah family that ruled Malabar when the Europeans first came to this land. His obstinacy in adhering to the letter of the old traditions of the land, and that too, in spite of the western education that he had received, gives us an idea of what his policy would have been in the matter of caste, had his family continued to be in possession of full political authority which they lost to Tippu Sultan, the Muhammadan conqueror of Malabar. Gandhi called off the hunger strike at the temple, asking his followers in Malabar to work to create a still stronger public opinion in favour of temple entry for the lower castes. These novel methods of effecting changes in the customs of the land brought many Nayar and Irava workers together in the Congress camp. Though Madhavan was now no more, this was what he had wanted.

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The work of the other leader of the younger generation is on somewhat different lines. While Madhavan was a devout Hindu, Mr. Aiyappan is a rationalist, inclined to socialism. By his sincerity and self-sacrifice he commands great respect not only among his own people but also among the upper castes. He started the most vigorous campaign to do away with distinctions of caste. The casteless dinners for breaking the tabu against commensalism were the result of his exhortations. He is still working hard to remove the great attachment that his people have for a fossilized faith. As a member of the Cochin Legislative Council he was interested in pushing through reforms calculated to help marriages between members of the different castes, and to improve the legal status of the matrilineal Irava women who under the present law (the Hindu Law) cannot inherit parental property. Mr. Aiyappan was to a great extent responsible for stopping the ritual obscenity that was prevalent in some of the temples of Cochin and Travancore.

The climax of the agitation for temple entry was the great proclamation of the Maharajah of Travancore by which, towards the end of 1937, all the lower caste Hindus were given the right to enter the temples where formerly only Nayars and castes superior to them were allowed. This proclamation can be said to be death-knell of untouchability, the most oppressive and degrading of all practices associated with caste. It need hardly be said that the credit for the spade work for making an atmosphere for this proclamation goes to the Irava leader Madhavan, to His Holiness Sri Narayana who made a Madhavan possible among the Iravas, and to the broad-minded Maharaja of Travancore. But an untouchable ascetic like Sri Narayana could not have done what he did if the political power of caste had remained what it was in pre-British India. The establishment of the simple elementary right of a human being, such as that of using all public roads, became possible in Malabar only due to the influence of the new culture.

RETROSPECT.

Looking back on the changes that have taken place in the culture of the Iravas, we find in the first place that the restraint placed on individual self-expression by the organization of Hindu society into a highly socialized hierarchy of graded authority and privilege broke down when the influence of indirectly transmitted Europeanism penetrated into the lives of the people. Hindu community functioned like a bee-hive sacrificing the individual, and also groups for the sake of effective social organization. All the norms were fashioned for this static ideal. If caste merely regulated work and introduced certain order among groups of men, there was little to be said against it, but when it became the master instead of the servant, it was time that it was subjected to change. But vested interests stepped in and always interrupted efforts to modify caste organization. When, as a result of English influence, caste weakened, it has not led to chaos but only to the improvement of individuals and groups that had no opportunity to widen their culture. It made it possible for them to

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participate in the whole cultural heritage of their country of which they could formerly come in contact with an infinitesimal part. Culture contact, under these circumstances, is beneficial to non-European people. It involves hardhsips of some kind, but reintegration follows disintegration on sound lines, after the over-developed evil elements of the old culture have been allowed to be lopped off. Among the Iravas, it will be impossible to find a single individual regretting the changes that have come in their culture as a whole.

The salutary effect of culture contact was more obvious on caste because it was the most hypertrophied of all the cultural institutions of the Hindus. Every caste including the Brahmans had fallen far short of their ideals, and had become mere slaves of formulae and ritualism, but each of the castes, however, insisted on its rights even when not performing its duties. The Brahman clerk in a public office or the Brahman cook of a Nayar claimed the privileges that were due to a learned man ; he expected to be called " *Ayyar* " (noble person), or " *swami* " (lord or master), the customary titles, which were appropriate in ancient days, but now stultifying to the thinking section of the users. There was in the later days of caste a complete divorce between its theory and practice. Privileges claimed on the slender basis of birth in a particular group must lead to degeneracy of such a group. The culture contact with Europe is saving India from the depth of degradation which caste led her into. The break down of caste will only strengthen India as it has done the Iravas, one of the lowest of the millions of her peoples.

Strange as it may seem the influence of Europeanism has been of benefit to the Hindus even in the religious sphere. Criticism by the missionaries made them examine the items of their belief from the wide humanitarian point and re-interpret them liberally. The Arya Samajist re-interpretation of Hinduism, for example, gave the authority of the Vedas for a casteless Hindu community. The neo-Hinduism of Swami Vivekananda which is the religion of the educated Hindu youth to-day is liberalized due to the indirect influence of Europeanism. The reformed, liberalized Hinduism is so satisfying to the average Irava that religiously there is very little danger of foreign faiths making his beliefs un-Indian.

Some students of Hindu culture who see in caste its most distinctive element seem to think that with the weakening of caste, India will cease to be India, and become " a bitter East End of the Anglo-Saxon empire." These pessimists, who are chiefly lovers of old Indian art, misunderstand the situation completely. To a certain extent the economic impact of Europeanism has destroyed the peculiarly specialist arts and crafts of certain castes, but there is no insuperable difficulty in reviving lost arts. The nationalists in India are helping this revival, but that does not mean that caste system with its old hierarchical privileges should be resuscitated. The culture of the Hindus includes, even after caste is left out of it, such vast items as the literature of its several languages beginning with Sanskrit ; the great religious systems with their exquisite philosophies, and Indian systems of architecture, medicine, music, dance, drama, etc. Their present inanition is due to the unintelligent handling by

caste. As Molony has shown in his *Book of South India*, it is a popular superstition to believe that caste has led to perfection in all crafts. Though caste made the acquisition of some elementary knowledge of some art or other easy, it led to the disuse of intelligence in its application to industry. Even for the sake of Indian arts and crafts, caste is not something to be desired for.

A student of sociology is not to indulge in prophesying, but when others have raised certain futurist problems, he is entitled to give such opinions on them as are warranted by the data at his command on cognate situations. A question of considerable importance to those interested in India either as administrators or as academic students of her vast culture is : Can we envisage an India where the higher and the lower castes will be living on equal terms ? ~~One~~ who knew South India very well says, " Whether the depressed classes (group B. and C. castes) will be ever received on an equal footing by Hindu society, no man can say. There may be some differences too deep for reconciliation."[1] But the Iravas give a more optimistic answer to this query. When by a process of self-purification and internal reforms, they shall have come up to the level of culture attained by the Iravas since the beginning of Sri Narayana's work in their midst, any other low caste in India can and will claim and get what the Iravas claimed and got for themselves. When once the Hindu gods cease to be stricklers of caste, and caste is danished from their temples, the Hindu men and women naturally follow suit. Caste is what caste does. When the insistence on touch tabus, and eating tabus, and on endogamy becomes less rigid, as it is now, the fundamentals of caste become correspondingly shaky, and then it is only a question of time for the superstructure to totter.

An English administrator

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[1] Charles Molony, " Depressed Classes " in *Political India*, ed. by J. Cumming, p. 140.

PLATE I.

Fig. 1. A typical scene in Mananteri village, North Malabar, terraced fields on the hills in the background, banana and coconut trees and rice fields below, and in the foreground a tank with human and animal bathers.

Fig. 2. Ruins of the Mannanar's "palace" at Eruvassi, North Malabar.

Fig. 3. An Irava farmer giving food to Nayadi beggars, the latter remaining at a distance in order not to defile the donor.

Fig. 4. A group of Cherumas at a festive gathering at a temple, standing away from higher castes.

PLATE I.

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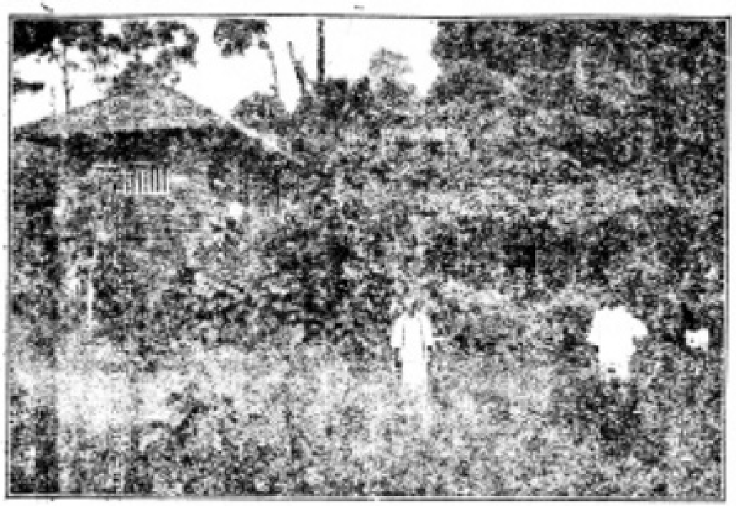

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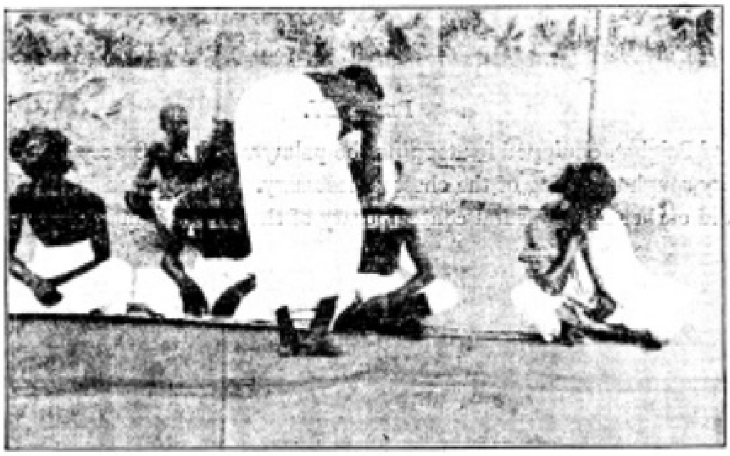

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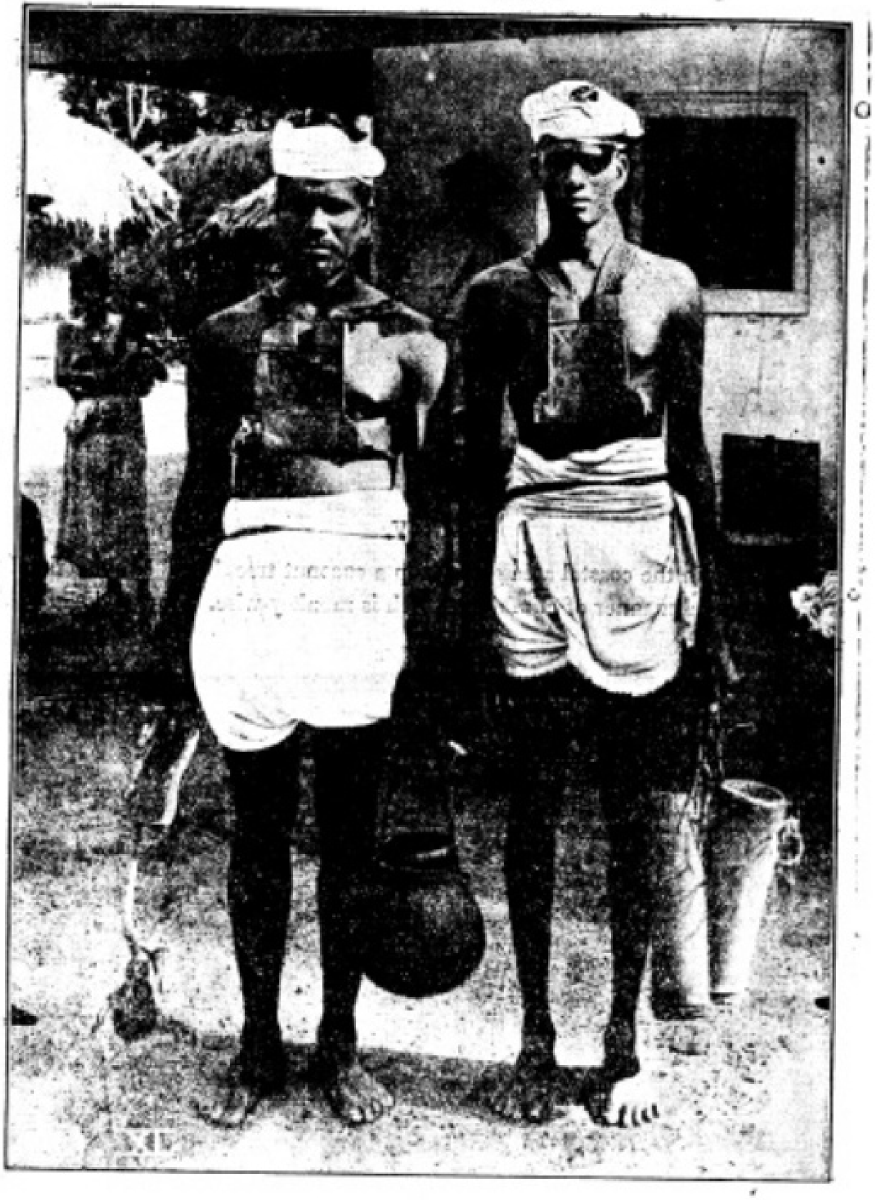

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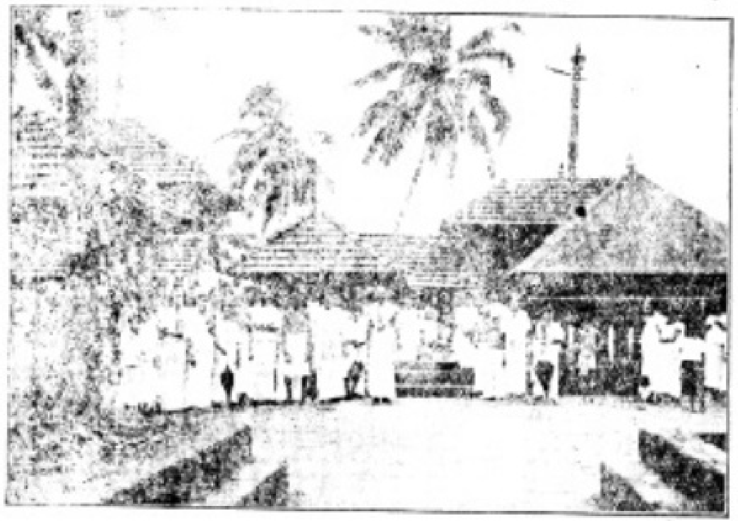
PLATE VII.

Fig. 1. Back view of the temple of Muttappan (extreme right) at Parassinikadavu, North Malabar. The tall bald gentleman in the middle of the group is the shaman.

Fig. 2. Girls playing at " marriage negotiations. " They divide themselves into two groups, one representing the bride's and the other, the bridegroom's.

Fig. 3. Step dance by a group of girls.



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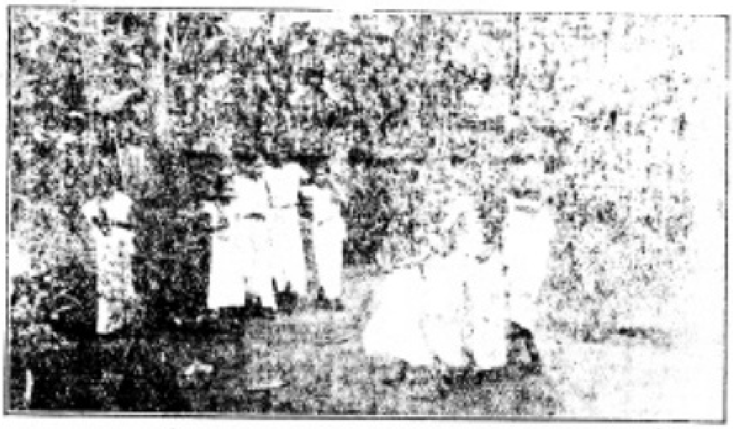

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PLATE IX.

Fig. 1. Funeral rites. Feeding of the crows by the mourners. The birds have been conditioned by custom to respond to the clapping of hands by which they are summoned.

Fig. 2. The sprinkling of purificatory liquids on the mourners.

Fig. 3. Performance of an item of medical magic. The figure of the demon Ghantakarna is drawn in white on the floor.

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PLATE X.

Fig. 1. Figure of demons used in amulets against fear.

Fig. 2. Figure of a Gandharva.

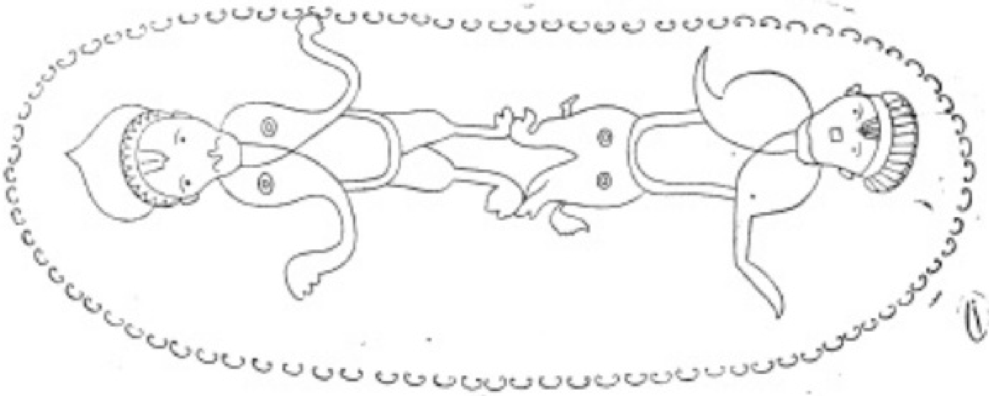
Fig. 3. *Pechi-chakram*, the magical figure by the possession of which locked doors, it is believed, can be opened by merely tapping on them.

Fig. 4. Yantra (magical figure) used for reconciliation.

Fig. 5. The magical figure of the godling Mukkan Chattan, which is used in inducing a state of trance.

Fig. 6. Figure pasted on the abdomen in the magical cure of stomachache.

Fig. 7. Figure drawn on a pot-sherd and dropped in a well, to gain influence over persons who drink from it.



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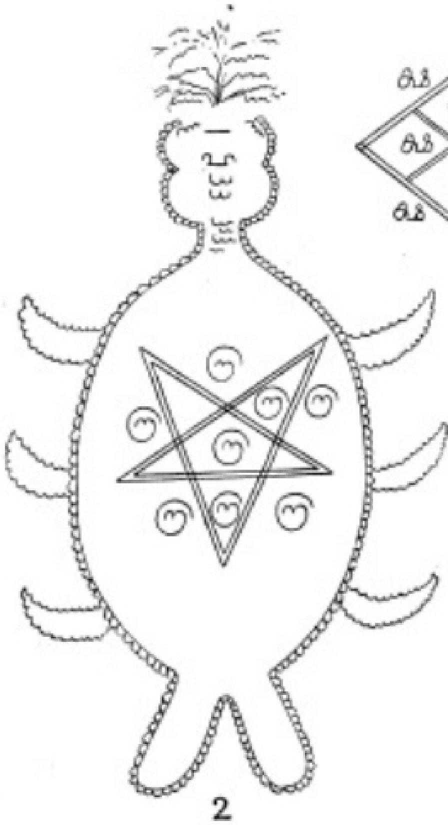

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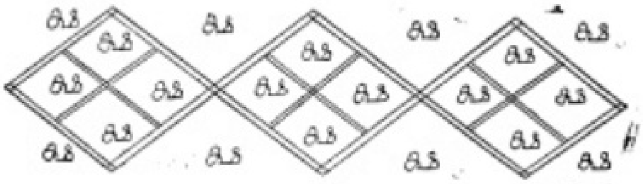

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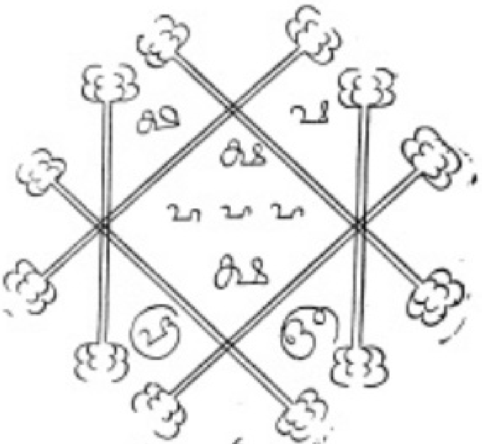

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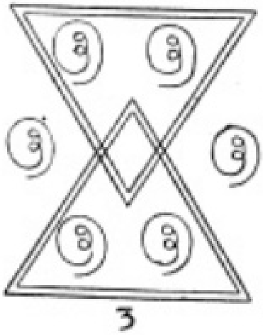

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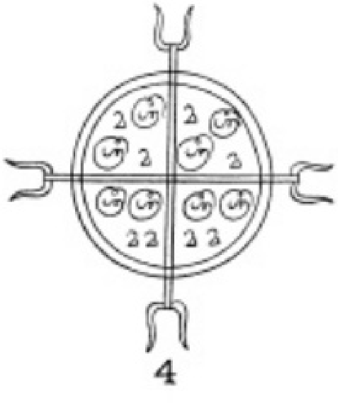

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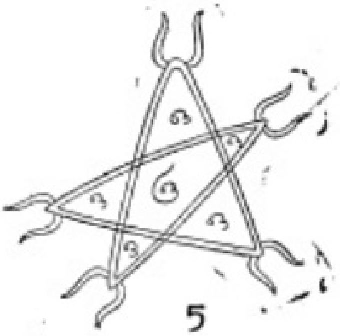

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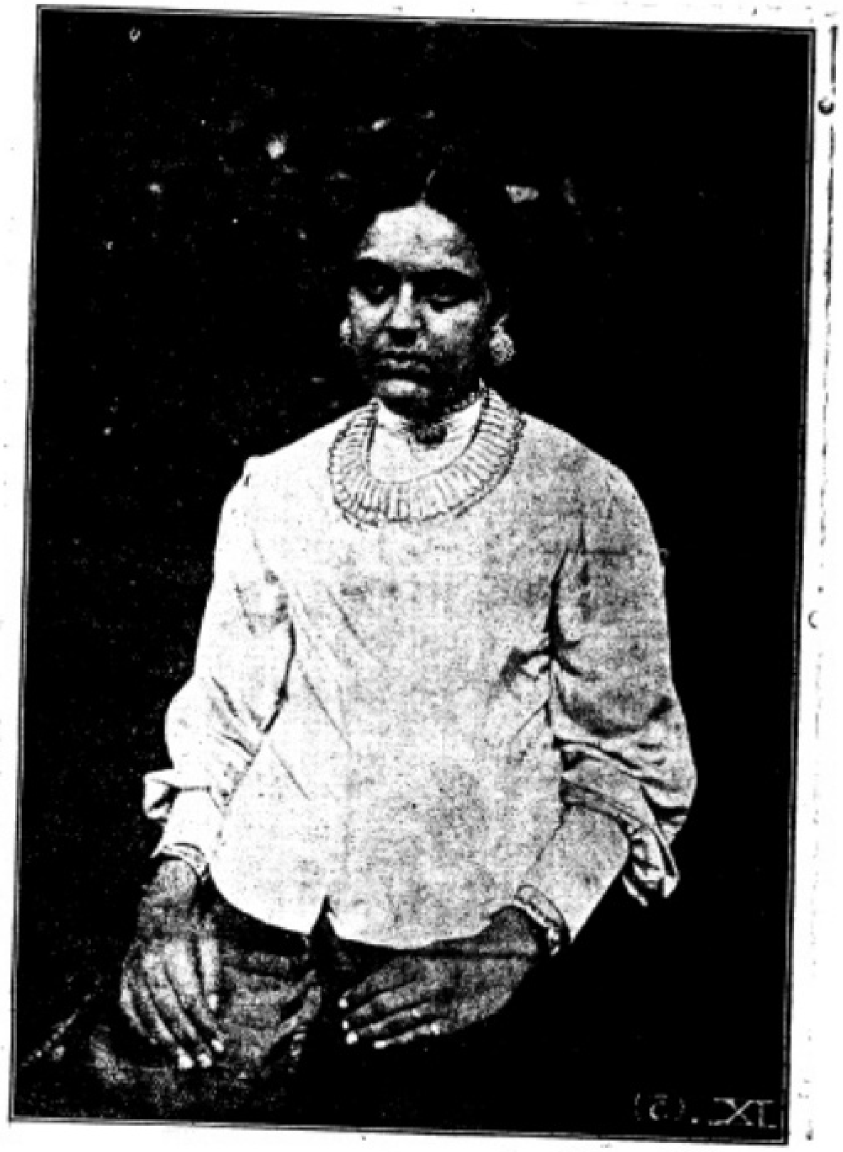
PLATE XI.



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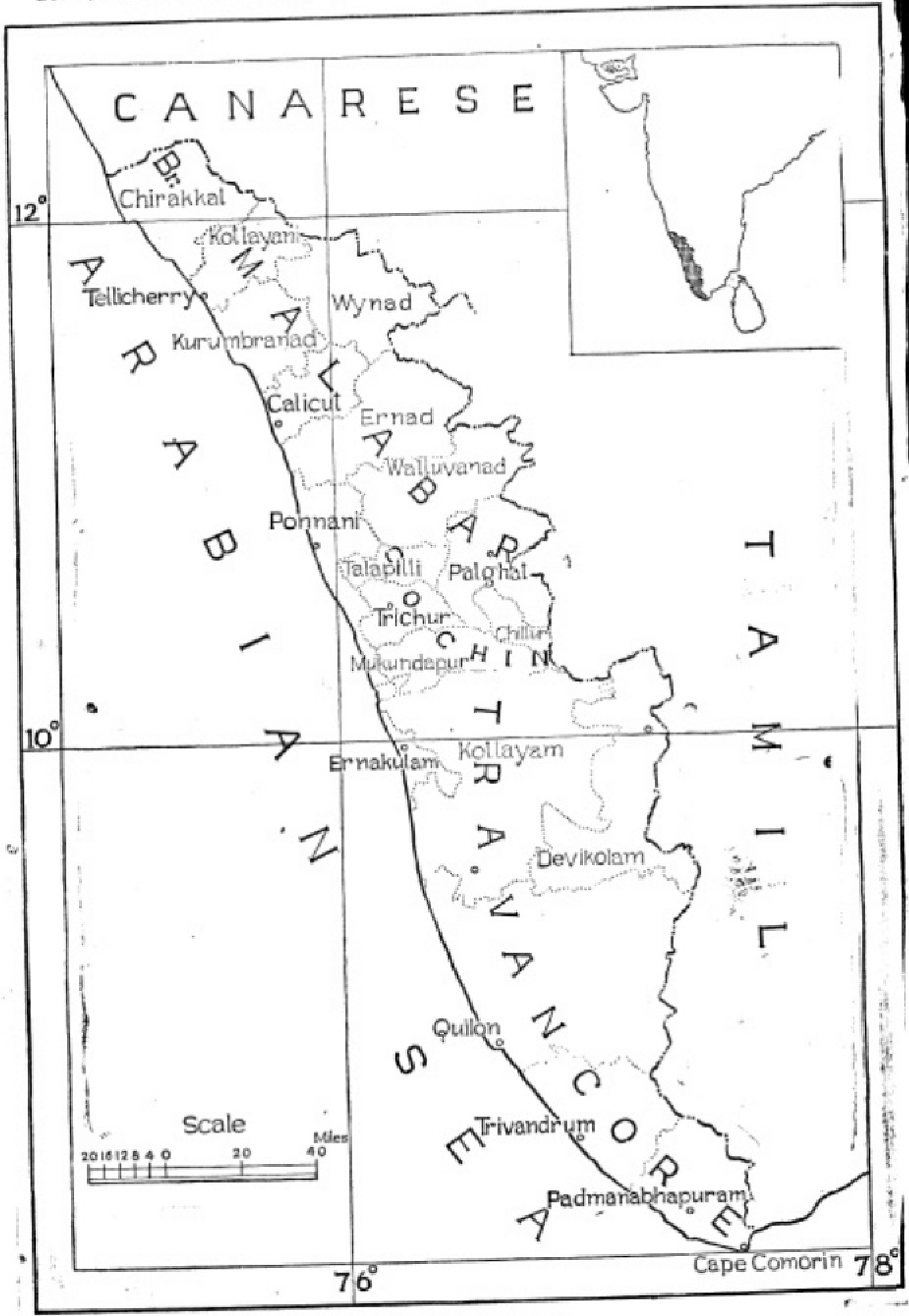

Map of British Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. (Inset) The Malayalam-speaking area of Southern India.